King-Hinds to PSS: You are our champion for our children. PAGE 2
Teen driver charged with DUI after Camaro hits pedestrian, power pole. PAGE 4

Hafa Adai!

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Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

9 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 250

www.saipantribune.com | MONDAY DECEMBER 16, 2024 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

DPS arrests 5 suspects in robbery of taxi driver

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Billy

Tipingeni

Police caught five suspects—two adults and three minors—involved in last Tuesday's assault and robbery of a taxi driver just hours after one of the suspects posted a video of the deed on social media.

See DPS on Page 4

RACQUEL FLOYD
The Hopwood Middle School Glee Club pocketed the richest purse after topping three categories in Bridge Capital's 14th Annual CNMI Got Talent last Saturday night at the Kensington Hotel. In the photo, from left, are emcee Brad Cleven, Bridge Capital owners Shawn Scott and John Baldwin, and Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

HMS Glee Club bags $5K in CNMI Got Talent

By RACQUEL H. FLOYD
raxfloyd@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

The Hopwood Middle School Glee Club was the biggest winner of Bridge Capital's 14th Annual CNMI Got Talent after taking home a total of $5,000 in cash as the group won $2,000 in the Kids Category, $1,500 in the Most Christmas Scene, and $1,500 for the Governor's Choice for Kids Category award last Saturday night at Kensington Hotel.

See HMS on Page 4

RACQUEL FLOYD
Grand prize winner in the adult category Bernice Sabino, fourth from left, with emcee Brad Cleven, Bridge Capital owners Shawn Scott and John Baldwin, and Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

DESPITE MARIJUANA NOW REMOVED FROM DRUG TESTING REQUIREMENTS

CUC aims to upholds zero tolerance policy

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. held a special board meeting last Thursday to discuss some of its policies, including its drug policy.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is revamping its drug policy in light of the recent passage of Public Law

See CUC on Page 4

US Marines start partial transfer from Okinawa in Japan to Guam

AP
A U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker refueling tanker aircraft takes off from the Kadena Air Base airfield in Kadena Town, west of Okinawa, southern Japan, Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2023.

TOKYO (AP)—The partial transfer of U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam began on Saturday, 12 years after Japan and the United States

See US on Page 4

INSIDE

LOCAL
Victoria Ann Camacho Deleon Guerrero, 2013 AlumKnight, and Zeno Camacho Deleon Guerrero Jr., 2017 AlumKnight, were awarded Master of Public Administration degrees from the University of Guam School of Business & Public Administration.

PAGE 9

WORLD
South Korea's parliament on Saturday impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his stunning and short-lived martial law decree, a move that ended days of political paralysis but set up an intense debate over Yoon's fate.

PAGE 10

LIFE & STYLE
Time magazine gave Donald Trump something it has never done for a Person of the Year designee: a lengthy fact-check of claims he made in an accompanying interview.

PAGE 11

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Local

King-Hinds to PSS: You are our champion for our children

PSS

Delegate-elect Kimberly King-Hinds met with key public education leaders last Thursday led by Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho and Board of Education vice chair Maisie B. Tenorio to talk about continuing the support and partnership between her office and the school district. Also in the meeting is the delegate-elect's incoming senior policy advisor Matthew Deleon Guerrero, associate commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna, Federal Programs officer Jacqueline Che, Finance director Arlene Lizama, Human Resources officer Jacqueline Che, and State Special Education director Donna M. Flores, among others.

Delegate-elect Kimberly King-Hinds said she will advocate the public education needs of the Commonwealth in the nation's capital following her meeting last Thursday afternoon with public education leaders.

The incoming United States congresswoman offered her support for the district's ongoing programs and initiatives that support the learning opportunities of the nearly 10,000 elementary, middle, and high school students as well as the work of the more than 1,000 staff members.

"We appreciate you for championing us and supporting us… by effectively advocating for our CNMI public school students, our classroom teachers, and our support staff… and every man and woman that makes up our PSS family," Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho told King-Hinds.

The delegate-elect met with Camacho, who was joined by Board of Education vice chair Maisie B. Tenorio, associate commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna, Federal Programs officer Jacqueline Che, Finance director Arlene Lizama, Human Resources officer Lucretia Deleon Guerrero, State Special Education director Donna M. Flores, and Head Start/ Early Head Start director Lathania Santos, among others.

"As you all know, we are here for you. You are the champions of our students, and I will be your champion in Washington, D.C.," King-Hinds told top public education leaders in a meeting at the office of Camacho.

"You (at PSS) are the subject-matter expert. I am here to help you get the job done to uplift our students, to be productive, responsible, and contributing citizens of our community," the delegate-elect said.

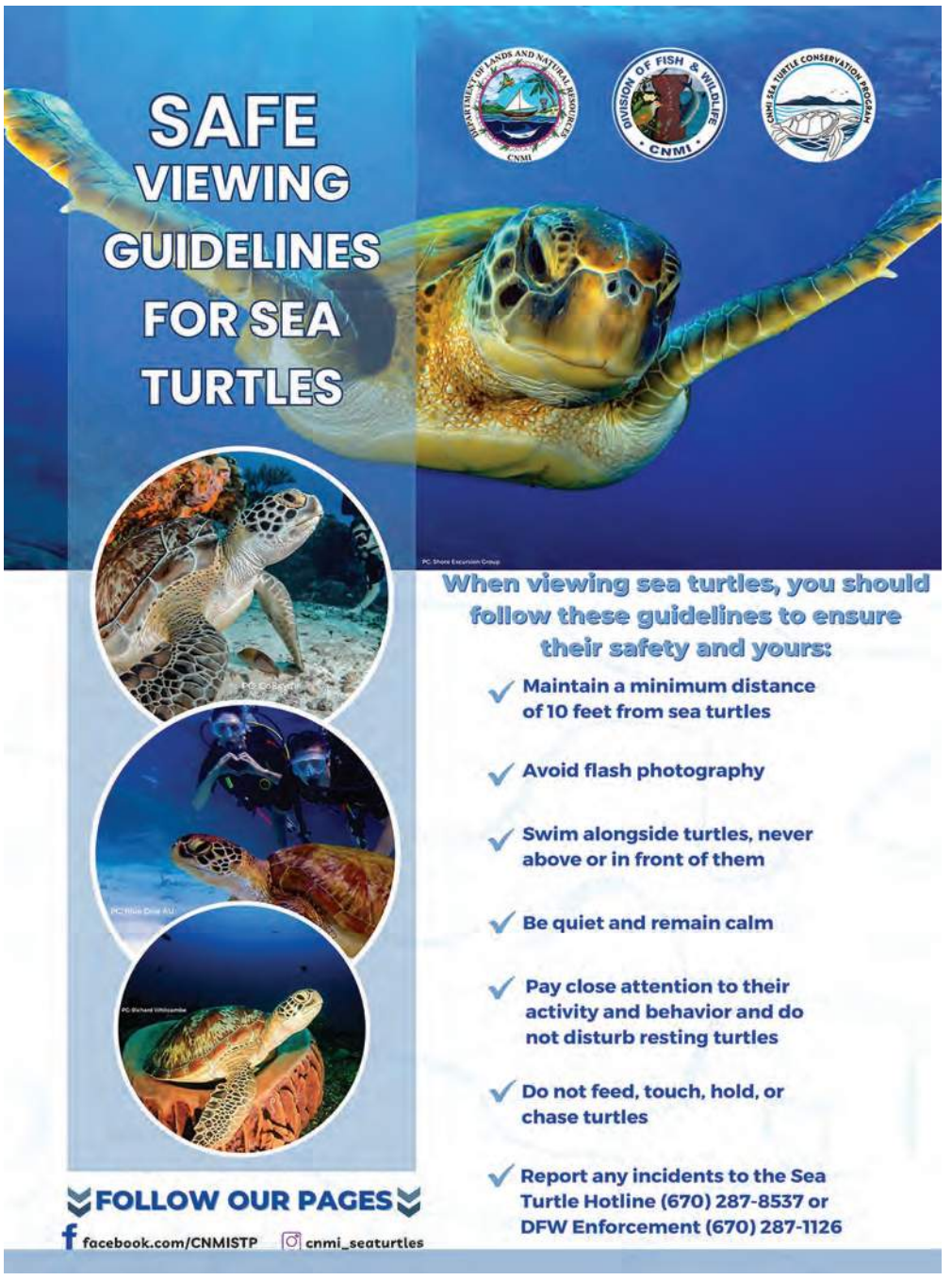
She commended PSS for "all the hard work," noting that "you already face a lot of pressure because you are responsible for the children of our community." I couldn't even begin to imagine how stressful it is."

From federal funds to local funds, infrastructure and facilities, the Special Education Program, the Head Start Program, Carolinian-Language and Heritage Studies, the JROTC Program, and the Child Nutrition Program, among other topics, Camacho gave the delegate-elect an update on the school district.

Camacho continued, "This is just a very special moment for all of us to discuss and talk about how we can work together to continue serving our children, employees, and everyone that depends on our public education."

King-Hinds agreed.

"I do believe that a lot of people in our community are really dedicated and motivated, and I observe that PSS is really proud of the work that they do." ***(PR)***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P. O. Box 501304, Saipan MP 96950 • Gualo Rai Center, Saipan
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NOTICE OF APPLICATION

As of December 16, 2024

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

NO.	APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1.	Vista Homes, LLC.	10/30/2024 SMS-2025-006	Construction of 46-Unit, two story Residential Duplex Apartments	Dandan, Saipan	Major Siting	Approved* 12/12/2024
2.	H J 2 Corporation dba Marine World	11/18/2024 SLR-2025-007	Commercial Motorized Parasailing Activities	All Designated Parasailing Zones, Saipan	Lagoon & Reef	Application Tabled* 11/20/2024
3.	GHD, Inc.	11/19/2024 SSPIm-2025-008	Geotechnical Soil Investigation	Puerto Rico, Saipan	Shoreline and Ports & Industrial	Approved* 12/2/2024
4.	Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC)	12/11/2024 SPIm-2025-009	Upgrade and Reconstruction of S03 Sewer Lift Station	Puerto Rico, Saipan	Ports & Industrial	Certified Complete* 12/13/2024

NMIAC §15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sitings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Adoption of:	]	FCD AD CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-0436
KEAHIE JO OMAPAS and C.P.O., Child and minor child, vs. LESTER MANGLONA PAUL and MARIAH BARCINAS-PAUL, Petitioners.	]	SUA SPONTE ORDER

The Adoption Hearing scheduled for December 16, 2024 at 9a.m. is hereby moved to **December 16, 2024** at **1:30 p.m.** in Courtroom **217A,** Guma Hustisia, Susupe, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

SO ORDERED this 14th day of November 2024.

/s/_____
TERESA KIM-TENORIO
Associate Judge

Lester M. Paul
P.O. Box 501606
Saipan, MP 96950
670-783-4688

Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Change of Name of:	]	FCD CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-0431
Lester M. Paul Petitioner	]	ORDER

FOR GOOD CAUSE SHOWN, Petitioner's Motion to Consolidate Adoption Hearing and Change of Name Hearing is hereby GRANTED/DENIED. The Change of Name Hearing is rescheduled to December 16, 2024 at 1:30 pm.

Dated this 13th day of November , 2024.

_____
ASSOCIATE JUDGE

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SP24P0198 Mileage: 33,632
2019 TOYOTA TACOMA
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SP24R0119 Mileage: 25,552
2019 TOYOTA SIENNA
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$23,999

SP24F0173 Mileage: 63,774
2020 TOYOTA TACOMA SR
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SP24T0130 Mileage: 16,495
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Teen driver charged with DUI after Camaro hits pedestrian, power pole

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

A 46-year-old pedestrian has been hospitalized with serious injuries after being struck by a vehicle in the early hours of Sunday morning along Beach Road. The Department of Public Safety confirmed the incident occurred at 2:51am near the Quartermaster Road area.

According to Simon T. Manacop, DPS assistant chief of police and acting public information officer, the crash involved a Chevy Camaro driven by a 17-year-old female. Both the driver and her 17-year-old passenger were transported to the Commonwealth Health Center with minor injuries, treated, and later released. The driver has been charged with driving under the influence.

"The vehicle sustained extensive damage," Manacop said, detailing how the Camaro veered off the road, skidded approximately 586 feet along the northbound shoulder, and struck three posted signs before hitting the pedestrian. The vehicle finally came to a stop after colliding with a power pole.

The pedestrian, a 46-year-old man, suffered serious injuries and was transported to CHC by the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services. He remains admitted for further treatment.

The crash also resulted in a power outage in the vicinity, with the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. immediately responding to repair the damage caused by the vehicle's collision with the power pole.

They shared to the community via social media, "As of 3am., the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. experienced a power outage to Kiya 3, affecting customers in the areas of Garapan Beach Road, Chalan Laulau, Northern Part of San Jose, Chalan Kiya, Middle Road Chalan Laulau, Quartermaster, Gualo Rai, and parts of China Town. Power crew are currently working to restore power to the affected areas. Updates will follow as soon as they are available. CUC appreciates the public's understanding and cooperation as our crew works to restore power."

Authorities have not disclosed further details about the auto-pedestrian incident or the ongoing investigation. DPS urges drivers to practice caution and avoid driving under the influence to prevent further tragedies on Saipan's roads.

HMS

From page 1

The HMS Glee Club performed renditions of the songs "Hark the Herald," "Carol of the Bells," and "O Come All Ye Faithful."

It was an unexpected victory for the group as multiple wins resulted in feelings of pride and surprise according to one of the members.

"Winning felt absolutely amazing for all of us especially because it was our first competition. It's such a rewarding experience for all of us. Honestly, we don't expect that we would win multiple times in a row," said HMS vice principal Karen Alla Manuel.

She added winning the grand prize and other awards was a rewarding experience and exceeded all their expectation.

"The group feels overjoyed and thankful to receive not just one grand prize but two others. They also feel validated that their efforts would reap such success and recognition," said Manuel.

She added that teamwork, countless hours of practice, and detail refinement contributed to their success. The cash prizes they received will be added to the club's funds to purchase uniforms and to send the group to compete in the Tumon Bay Music Festival in Guam in 2025.

Meanwhile, 18-year-old Bernice Sabino was a repeat winner of the grand prize and pocketed $2,000 for topping the adult category. It was 11 years when ago when she first won in the CNMI Got Talent.

"In 2013, there were no categories, everyone was just in the same (competition) to win the same prize... I'm just really thankful that I was given this opportunity to win it again. I would really like to thank God because it wouldn't be possible without him, and the winning, really just kind of made me really happy, and I'm sure I made my parents really happy. I just hope it lifted a lot of people's spirits up for the holidays," she said.

Sabino added in an interview that daily practice and adjustments were key aspects of her performance and that the goal was to entertain the audience and evoke specific feelings.

"No matter how much I've been doing performances for such a long time, it doesn't get any easier with nervousness, and being prepared is one of the things that really takes away from the nervousness. So, for preparation, I would say I practice every day and try to tweak a lot of things I could pick up maybe add up some choreography to how I can be different, how can I entertain. I feel like the purpose of this whole competition is to entertain and make people feel a certain way with a performance, and that's what I was trying to achieve with that."

The cash prize won by Sabino will be used for her college expenses and as well as to buy Christmas gifts for her parents.

"In this economy, it's really hard to get by but I will use it for my college and get some gifts for my family for the holidays."

A total of 15 contestants participated in the competition and other winners include—Dolphin's Concert Band and Dorothi Li and Jeshuron He first and second place, respectively, in the kids category.

In the adult category, Donna Rose Santiago and Robby Murillo won second.

Special award in the Governor's Choice for the adult category was awarded to Matthew Siden Vallo, Best in Rota award was received by siblings Kalen and Kristen Manglona.

The panel of judges were first lady Wella Palacios, Rep. Marissa Flores (Ind-Saipan), Sen. Dennis Mendiola (R-Saipan), Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture executive director Gloriana Teuira, and Rep. Vincent Diego Camacho (D-Saipan).

Bridge Capital owners John Baldwin and Shawn Scott expressed their gratitude to attendees for their support.

"I first came to the CNMI and we realized how much talent it was on the islands. We were so impressed and it was actually John's idea to come up with the CNMI Got Talent, which has now been an annual event for so many years. We want to thank all of you for coming tonight to support and encourage the many talented people," said Scott.

Raffle drawing of prizes such as 55" TV, cash, and gadgets were done in between the performances of the contestants and Brad A. Cleven served as the talent competition's emcee.

US

From page 1

agreed on their realignment to reduce the heavy burden of American troop presence on the southern Japanese island, officials said.

The relocation started with 100 members of III Marine Expeditionary Force stationed on Okinawa moving to the Pacific island for the initial logistical work, the U.S. Marine Corps and Japan's Defense Ministry said in a joint statement.

Under the plan agreed between Tokyo and Washington in April 2012, about 9,000 of the 19,000 Marines currently stationed on Okinawa are to be moved out of Okinawa, including about 4,000 of them to be moved to Guam in phases. Details, including the size and timing of the next transfer, were not immediately released.

The Marine Corps is committed to the defense of Japan and meeting operational requirements to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific, and it will maintain presence in the region "through a combination of stationing and rotating Marines in Japan, Guam and Hawaii," the joint statement said.

Japan has paid up to $2.8 billion for the building of infrastructure at the U.S. bases on Guam, and the U.S. government will fund the remaining costs. The two governments will continue to cooperate on the development of Camp Blaz, which will serve as the main installation for Marines stationed in Guam.

The Marines and Japan Self Defense Forces will conduct joint training in Guam, the statement said.

Okinawa, which was under U.S. postwar occupation until 1972, is still home to a majority of the more than 50,000 American troops based in Japan under a bilateral security pact, while 70% of U.S. military facilities are on Okinawa, which accounts for only 0.6% of Japanese land.

Many Okinawans have long complained about the heavy U.S. military presence on the island, and say Okinawa faces noise, pollution, aircraft accidents and crime related to American troops.

DPS

From page 1

Department of Public Safety shared with *Saipan Tribune* that the adult defendants were identified as Jay Billy, 20, and JR Tipingeni, 19, and three other male juveniles who are 15 years old.

DPS assistant chief of police and acting public information officer Simon T. Manacop shared that DPS obtained arrest warrants for five suspects which was shortly executed thereafter.

Last Saturday evening police shared that DPS apprehended the suspects, two adults and three juveniles all aged 15 years old.

"All suspects have been charged for kidnapping, aggravated assault and battery, robbery, and disturbing the peace. Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio has set bail at $50,000 for each of them."

The visually disturbing video was taken by one of the minors involved in the robbery. The teen proudly showed the license plate of the car to viewers before walking over to his companions who were demanding for the taxi driver's wallet. The victim, an Asian man, was shown, pinned to the driver's seat, with the men choking him with the taxi car's own seatbelt, and blood flowing from the victim's nose from blows inflicted, which matched police reports of the men choking and beating the driver

In the video, the young men demanded for the man's wallet to which he responded "You already take my wallet." The response from the men was 'you stop complaining you stupid s**t' and 'shut the f**k up.'

The young suspect filming, continually mocked the man, putting his phone camera in the face of the victim, as the victim pleaded "please, I don't want to die," to which the young man filming mocked and said 'Yes, you wanna."

The taxi driver added "I have a family... " and the young men retorted "Your family? Tell your family I love them too."

Manacop shared with the media that the video is related to the case.

Yesterday Manacop told media "AG [Attorney General] had asked us to hold off on some information until after the bail hearing because it deals partly with juveniles. The information for the adults will be released at bail. "

Police say that all suspects have been apprehended are now under the custody of the Department of Corrections.

If anyone has information regarding the incident or to report any other crime, police encourage everyone to call the DPS Criminal Investigation Bureau at (670) 664-9042, DPS headquarters at (670) 664-9001 or the Crime Stoppers hotline at (670) 234-7272 if callers wish to remain anonymous.

CUC

From page 1

23-27 which basically removes marijuana from all pre-employment drug testing for government employees with certain exceptions.

Last Thursday, CUC held a special board meeting to discuss some of its policies, including its drug policy.

According to CUC chief finance officer Betty Terlaje, what was proposed to the board was a clear definition of what safety sensitive positions and reiteration that CUC is zero-tolerance when it comes to drug use.

Currently, because marijuana is still federally illegal, CUC is treating the substance as such.

"CUC is finetuning its drug policy, primarily with the legalization of marijuana. There are a lot of concerns and questions raised by the employees too. Some bring up medical marijuana use, so what we need to do is fine tune it, so marijuana use is defined better. Also, the federal government still sees marijuana as an illegal drug so we need to be cognizant of that as it's applicable to us because we're federal grant recipients. Our director, our HR, and myself have been working on this but when the governor signed the law regarding [the exemption of marijuana from pre-employment drug tests] then we had to modify our rules to make sure that it is still clear that we're still zero tolerance so if they're positive, we can turn them down if they are applying for a safety sensitive position. The law allows that," she said.

Terlaje said CUC management is proposing zero-tolerance across the board.

"We have a zero-tolerance policy, so all employees should not be using illegal drugs, including marijuana because it's federally, it's still considered illegal. All employees are subjected to this zero-tolerance policy. We randomly test people in safety sensitive positions to make sure that our employees and our community is safe because these people handle heavy equipment and are driving," she said.

According to a previous article on the *Saipan Tribune*, Rep. Diego Vincent F. Camacho (D-Saipan), who is the principal author of House Bill 23-50 (now P.L. 23-27), said the intent of the legislation really is just to be in line with Public Law 20-66, the Taulamwaar Sensible CNMI Cannabis Act of 2018.

Public Law 20-66 authorized the personal, medicinal, and commercial use of cannabis/marijuana.

Camacho said the pre-employment matter was not addressed in Public Law 20-66.

"Really the intent of this legislation is for the initial drug testing, anything after that is on the employee or the employer," he said.

Camacho said the legislation also addresses that any position that is federally funded, even partially, will be the exception to include positions that are safety sensitive.

He said it also authorizes the director of Office of Personnel Management to identify these positions.

The passage of P.L. 23-27 comes after Palacios announced his plans for a cannabis tourism industry reform.

MVA, Toyota launch 'Tomodachi-Marianas by Toyota Tsusho' in Japan

At the invitation of Toyota Tsusho, a subsidiary of the Toyota Group, the Marianas Visitors Authority and AK Toyota dealership on Saipan had the opportunity to promote The Marianas in person at the Toyota Group Thanks Sale held on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7 and 8, in Nagoya, Japan. Together, they launched the "Tomodachi-Marianas by Toyota Tsusho" campaign to an estimated 15,000 attendees. Tomodachi translates as "friend" in English.

MVA

The Marianas Visitors Authority, Toyota Tsusho, Toyota Tourist and AK Toyota promote attractions in The Marianas at Toyota Group Thanks Sale on Dec. 7-8, 2024, in Nagoya, Japan. The trade show attracted an estimated 15,000 attendees.

Toyota Group is the largest company in Japan and includes automobile-related, apparel, medical, housing, insurance, food, steel, iron, social contribution, travel, heavy equipment manufacturing, real estate, construction, computer software, and sports businesses. The company's in-house travel company—Toyota Tourist—contacted the MVA in December 2023 to invite the tourism office to join their annual employee appreciation sale and share about the tourist attractions in Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

"Toyota Tsusho reached out to partner with the MVA in our continuing marketing efforts to increase visitor arrivals from Japan, as they know that our success translates to more visitors, a stronger economy and better business," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "At the fair we had an enthusiastic response from people who stopped by The Marianas promotional display. We hope this will be the start of a continuing relationship with Toyota toward our mutual goals."

MVA

Executive officer Toshiyuki Azeo of Toyota Tsusho, second left; general manager and vice president Clark Boswell of AK Guam and Saipan, third left; Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion, center; general manager Masanori Shibata of Toyota Tsusho Corp., third right; president Yugo Narita of Aqua Connections; and other executives of Toyota Tsusho and the MVA at The Marianas promotional booth at the Toyota Group Thanks Sale on Dec. 7 and 8, 2024, in Nagoya, Japan. The trade show attracted an estimated 15,000 attendees.

At the fair, the MVA, Toyota Tsusho, Toyota Tourist, and AK Toyota shared promotional material and destination videos about The Marianas, provided details of a specific tour package to the islands, answered questions, and demonstrated "mwar" (floral garland) making. The MVA was joined by approximately 190 other exhibitors at the event and was the only destination allowed to operate a booth at this event exclusive to the Toyota Group.

Direct three-hour flights to Saipan from Tokyo-Narita are operated three times a week by United Airlines. ***(PR)***

Supreme Court affirms probate court choice of administrator

On Dec. 12, 2024, the Supreme Court affirmed the probate court's order declining to remove Herman P. Sablan as administrator and Anthony H. Aguon as attorney for the estate of Concepcion Faisao Tudela.

The probate court had appointed Sablan to be the administrator of the estate, to which Appellant Ivan-Rufo Faisao Tudela objected, adding an objection to the continued representation of the Estate by attorney Aguon. After reviewing Tudela's objection, the court declined to remove Sablan and Aguon, finding Tudela had failed to provide adequate grounds for their removal.

On appeal, the Supreme Court found that Tudela had failed to present meritorious legal argument in his briefs or at oral argument. Holding that the Court will not determine an issue on appeal when no argument has been presented, the Court affirmed the decision of the probate court. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950-1055
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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 01-2025

Opening date: December 16, 2024 **Closing date: January 03, 2025**

Location:	**SAIPAN**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) AOA Controller-I	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) General Maintenance-I	PL 3/1 ($8.01/hr. or $16,655.51/annum)
Location:	**TINIAN**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) AOA Controller/Ground Maintenance-I	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) General Maintenance-II	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) Tariff Technician-I	PL 4/1 ($8.41/hr. or $17,488.29/annum)
Location:	**ROTA**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) Ports Police/ARFF Trainee	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr.)
	(1) General Maintenance-II	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the ***CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office, Tinian International Airport, or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.*** Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00 P.M. on Friday, January 03, 2025.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays and austerity, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin, Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnmiports.com and hrspecialist@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

CPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and CPA hires those who are legally entitled to employment in the CNMI.

FREDERICK A. PANGELINAN
Acting Executive Director

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-25-002

KAGMAN WATER TANK REPLACEMENT AND BOOSTER PUMP STATION UPGRADE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the construction of the Kagman Water Tank Replacement and Booster Pump Station Upgrade in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of demolition of the existing water tank, booster pumps, yard piping, and all other appurtenances; construction of a new 70,000-gallon cast-in-place circular concrete water tank; removal of the temporary modular tank; construction of new generator building; installation of new generator equipment, flow meter stations, triplex pitless booster pump system, telemetry and controls; reconnection of existing waterlines; electrical works; site improvements; and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the project plans and specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the US Public Law 117-2 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **four hundred twenty (420) calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 5, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-25-002, Kagman Water Tank Replacement and Booster Pump Station Upgrade"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on December 27, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 12, 2024** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Ms. Alley Reyes, Engineer, Water & Wastewater – via email at alley.reyes@cucgov-.org and Ms. Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Administrative Technichian Senior – via email at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Syria's dictator falls victim to Hamas' grave miscalculation

Thank Israel's resolve for helping to topple Syria's dictatorship.

Over the weekend, rebel forces succeeded in running strongman Bashar Assad out of Damascus. After his father ruled for 30 years, Assad took over in 2000 and ran Syria "with an iron fist that crushed all dissent and relied heavily on the country's feared security forces," NPR observed.

With help from Russia and Iran, he managed to stay in power despite a civil war that has lasted more than a decade. Assad is infamous for using chemical weapons on his own people and for leaving thousands of bodies in his wake. He has now found safe haven in Vladimir Putin's Russia.

The rebels took advantage of the vacuum created by Putin's preoccupation with Ukraine and Iran's evisceration at the hands of Israel in the aftermath of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas massacre. In the ensuing 14 months, the Jewish state's military response has left Hamas in shambles and put Hezbollah in retreat. Israel has eliminated several terrorist leaders and carried out attacks that have exposed Iran's weakness.

"By removing the Assad regime, the insurgents—known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham—have cut off Tehran's main proxy militia, Hezbollah, from its supply lines," Jonathan Spyer, an analyst for the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis, wrote in The Wall Street Journal. "This was possible because of Israel's mauling of Hezbollah in November, prompting the terror group to accept a ceasefire."

He goes on to note that Israel's response to Oct. 7 "laid bare the profound inferiority of the Iranians and their allies in direct confrontation."

It's important to note that all of this happened in spite of the Biden administration, not because of it. At every turn, President Joe Biden and his foreign policy team sought to restrain Israel rather than encourage its defensive military actions. At the same time, the White House offered a mix of appeasement and hesitation in the face of Iran's belligerence and its efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

Assad might very well still be in power, and Iran's mullahs in a state of comfort, had Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu acceded to the constant hectoring about "restraint" coming from Biden and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

How the unrest in Syria ends is the larger question. The United States has designated Hayat Tahrir al-Sham a terrorist organization, but the group's leaders have disavowed a previous association with al-Qaida and "have tried to gain international legitimacy by eschewing global jihadist ambitions and focusing on organized governance in Syria."

It will now be up to the incoming administration of Donald Trump to keep them on the latter path, creating a more democratic and stable Syria.

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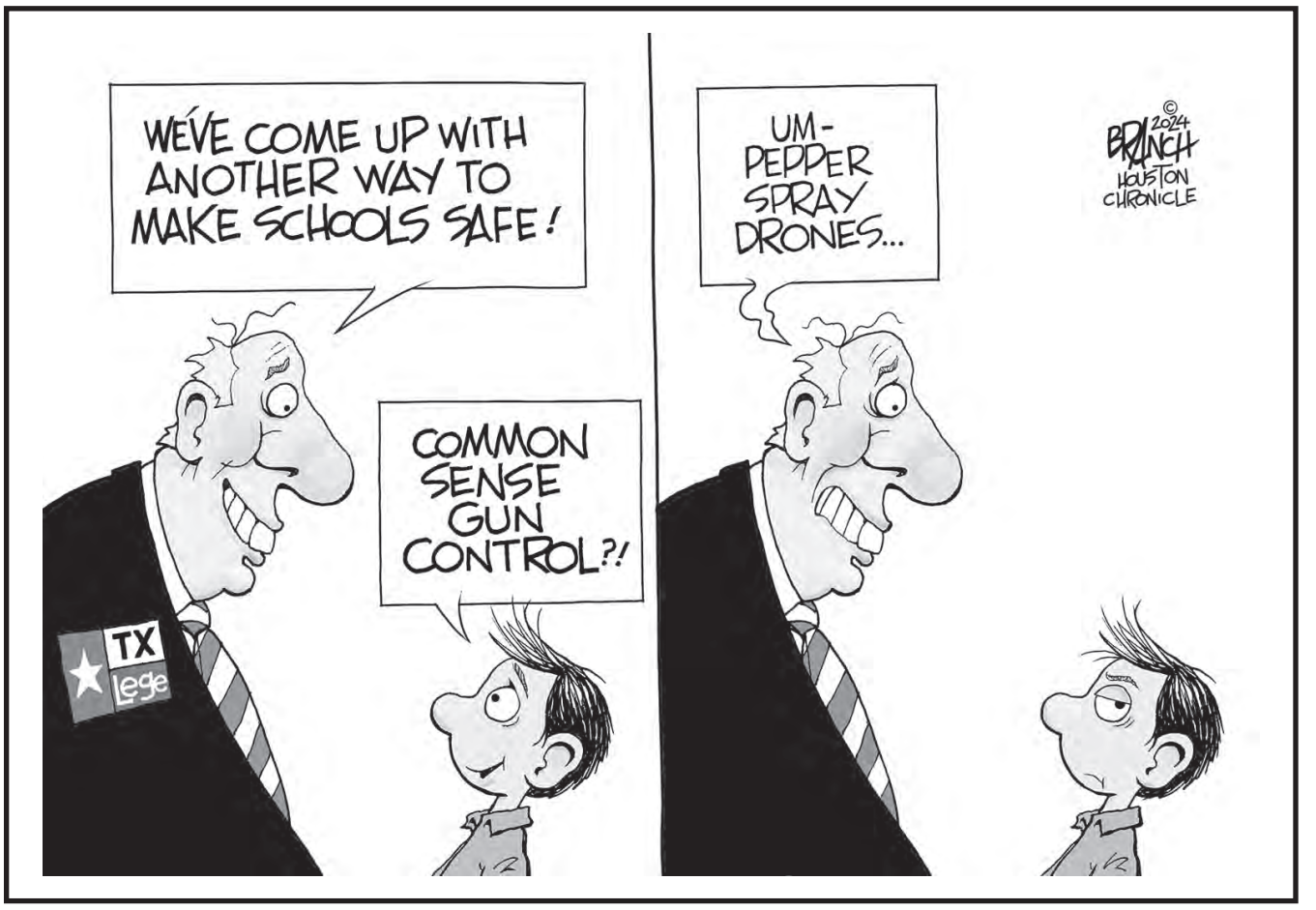

WE'VE COME UP WITH ANOTHER WAY TO MAKE SCHOOLS SAFE!
COMMON SENSE GUN CONTROL?!
TX Lege
UM- PEPPER SPRAY DRONES...
BRANCH ©2024 HOUSTON CHRONICLE

This is why Donald Trump just doubled down on mass deportation of millions of immigrants

By ROBIN ABCARIAN
Los Angeles Times

A chilling scene in the new movie "Wicked" sums up what's wrong with President-elect Donald Trump's view of immigrants.

The two witches, Elphaba and Glinda, have traveled to the Emerald City to meet the Wonderful Wizard of Oz. The Wizard explains to them that he plans to consolidate power over his restive land by demonizing its animals, who not only have the power of speech but are also the equals of human beings. He will strip them of the ability to speak and confine them to cages.

But why would you do such a thing, asks the tender-hearted, green-skinned Elphaba, whose horror at his plan will eventually turn her into the Wicked Witch of the West.

"The best way to bring folks together," the Wonderful Wizard of Oz tells the women, "is to give them a really good enemy."

That is the essence of Trump's immigration policy.

Trump told Kristen Welker of NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that he plans to keep his campaign promise to deport millions of people.

"You have no choice," he said. "First of all, they're costing us a fortune. But we're starting with the criminals, and we've got to do it. And then we're starting with the others, and we're going to see how it goes."

He then preposterously claimed that more than 13,000 undocumented "murderers" had been "released into our country over the last three years."

"They're walking down the streets," he said. "They're walking next to you and your family. And they're very dangerous people."

When Welker tried to point out that he was misconstruing the data, Trump doubled down: "It's 13,099, and it's during the Biden period of time. And these are murderers, many of whom murdered more than one person."

This is, of course, false. The Department of Homeland Security reported that more than 13,000 noncitizens had been convicted of homicide in the U.S. over the past four decades, including during Trump's first term. And most of them were in jails and prisons, not walking the streets.

I really can't believe we are going to be forced to spend the next four years debunking Trump's apocalyptic fantasies — nor how miserable he will make life for so many people based on his need to make enemies of people whose skin color does not match his own.

Whether immigrants "cost us a fortune" or not is one of the most studied questions in the entire field of immigration studies. Time and again, experts have concluded that immigrants do not cost U.S. taxpayers "a fortune," depress wages, increase government deficits and debt, or commit a disproportionate share of crime.

At the dawn of the Biden administration, after four years of Trump's immigrant-bashing, the immigration expert Alex Nowrasteh of the libertarian Cato Institute wrote a smart little booklet, "The Most Common Arguments Against Immigration and Why They're Wrong." It is a very helpful, easy-to-digest primer on the falsehoods typically leveled against immigration, legal and illegal.

The most repeated notion is that immigrants take jobs from Americans, lower their wages and hurt the poor. As Nowrasteh writes, this claim "has the greatest amount of evidence rebutting it."

He cites a study by the Harvard labor economist and immigration scholar George Borjas, who found that between 1990 and 2010, the only group of people whose wages were negatively affected by immigrants were native-born high school dropouts, who make up about 9% of American adults. That group's wages dropped by less than 2%. But Borjas also found that immigrants boosted the wages of other native-born Americans, yielding a net increase in native-born wages of about 0.6%.

I would love to put Nowrasteh's booklet in Trump's stocking this Christmas, but, as we've learned, he's not big on reading.

So just how many people will Trump target for deportation? It's impossible to know for sure, but you can bet he intends to inflict as much pain as he can.

Eleven million undocumented immigrants were living in the U.S. as of 2022, 6 million of whom were employed, according to the American Immigration Council. More than 1.5 million work in construction, making up about 13.7% of the workforce. Nearly a quarter-million work in agriculture, making up 12.7% of workers. A million work in the hospitality industry, or 7.1% of the workforce.

Trump's incoming border "czar," Tom Homan, has said the government will focus on deporting criminals first but that all immigrants in the country without papers will risk deportation.

Unsurprisingly, farm industry groups are frantically lobbying

See TRUMP on Page 7

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Why the Naval Academy gets to keep affirmative action

In 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down affirmative action in private and public university admissions. Now a federal district court has upheld essentially the same practice as used by the U.S. Naval Academy. Although that might seem inconsistent, it isn't. The Supreme Court specifically exempted the military academies from its ruling, and the district court, following precedent, deferred to Congress and the president in the context of military personnel decisions.

The court's decision is legally defensible. The military needs a racially balanced officer corps, and the academies play a crucial role in training officers, especially those who make it to the highest ranks.

Whether the ruling is ultimately upheld by the Supreme Court probably depends on how admissions go at selective private and public universities in the next few years. If the racial balance remains fairly stable after the Supreme Court's landmark 2023 decision, Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard, then the justices may well conclude that affirmative action isn't necessary for the military academies to achieve balance.

If, however, the number of Black and Latino students declines precipitously, it's conceivable that two or more of the court's conservatives could join the court's three liberals for a majority to allow the academies to keep admitting students based on their current practice.

The district court's 178-page opinion goes into great detail about how students are admitted to the Naval Academy. To simplify, congressional nominations play a gatekeeping role; apart from that highly distinctive aspect of the admissions process, much of the rest of the selection of students would be familiar to anyone with knowledge of competitive civilian college admissions as they existed before the Harvard case. The academies consider academics, athletics, other extracurriculars and evidence of character. There is no racial quota or explicit assignment of value to racial diversity. However, race may be one factor in a "holistic" assessment of the applicants. In this regard, there is little daylight between the facts of the Naval Academy case and those of the Harvard case.

Where things start to look very different is in the government's explanation of why it needs a racially diverse officer corps. The government provided, and the federal court credited and cited, extensive evidence of racial violence in the military in the decades before and during the Vietnam era, including race riots aboard naval vessels. The court noted the history of racial discrimination in the armed services, especially in the Navy. Reviewing this context, the court accepted the government's argument that a racially diverse officer corps is mission-critical.

The decision could potentially have ended there—and maybe should have. In the Harvard case, the Supreme Court majority didn't say that no justification was sufficient to permit the use of race in admissions, just that the diversity rationale proffered by the universities was inadequate. The military's justification is much stronger, and that, in principle, should suffice to uphold the academy's admissions process.

Yet the district court went further, holding that the political branches of the government are owed substantial deference by the courts when it comes to military decision-making. Think of that part of the holding as suspenders added to the belt of the military's rationale for its policy. Not only does the government have a strong reason for using race, said the judge, but the court should weigh the government's logic more strongly because the military is involved.

There is precedent supporting the idea of deference to the military, to be sure. What's less clear is that the precedent rests on compelling logic. The archetypal case of deferring to the military's judgment is the notorious Japanese internment case, Korematsu v. United States, which the Supreme Court in 2018 declared was "gravely wrong the day it was decided."

Subsequent examples of deference to military judgment have been pretty doubtful, if not quite as egregious. In one well-known First Amendment case, Goldman v. Weinberger, the Supreme Court deferred to the military's personnel judgment in refusing to allow an Air Force psychologist to wear a yarmulke with his uniform.

By NOAH FELDMAN
Bloomberg Opinion

Noah Feldman is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. A professor of law at Harvard University, he is author, most recently, of "To Be a Jew Today: A New Guide to God, Israel, and the Jewish People."

Having insisted in court that this policy was necessary to maintain uniformity, the military subsequently changed the policy. Now, happily, even Sikh turbans are permitted as part of the uniform.

The upshot is that what the government calls military necessity when it's in court may not actually be all that necessary. When it comes to the military's personnel decisions, the courts are perfectly able to weigh the government's claims against the evidence. The doctrine of deference to the military's judgment should be scaled back and perhaps even eliminated.

If the Supreme Court ultimately decides to strike down the academy's admissions policy, it may have to do precisely that, weakening the precedent on deference to the military's judgment. Since deference to the military is traditionally a conservative doctrine, it would be ironic to see the court's conservatives giving less weight to the military's judgment in the affirmative action context.

In any case, that will only happen if Donald Trump doesn't stop the practice with an executive order, ending the lawsuit. So, for now, the best way to predict what the Supreme Court will ultimately do is to wait and see how the racial balance in admissions proceeds in the civilian context. Then, watch the Trump administration's Department of Defense. If the case reaches the justices, the court should decide it based on the underlying strength of the government's argument for racial balance, not deference to the military.

Commentary: How Starbucks became my coffee shop of last resort

I've always had an ambivalent relationship with Starbucks. But especially post-pandemic, the java juggernaut has become my coffee shop of last resort. And I'm not alone—U.S. sales in the latest quarter were down 6% compared with a year earlier.

The company's new chief executive recently sketched out a rescue plan that includes eliminating upcharges for nondairy milk, simplifying menu options to speed up orders and a return to writing customers' names on cups. But it's going to take a whole lot more than markers to win back customers like me, who see the stores where we get our lattes as "third places"—locations such as libraries and, yes, coffee shops, where we form connections with others in our communities.

Starbucks' stores used to fill this need. I wrote parts of my upcoming book in three of them and thanked them in the acknowledgments. But many things have changed in the years since.

Let's start with the overworked staff—witnessing the tireless employees valiantly plow through countless orders with robot-like efficiency doesn't give a cozy vibe. I don't expect to be best friends with my barista, but if the chain hired more workers and quit union busting, workers might be less harried and I'd be more inclined to spend there. I want my coffee dollars to contribute to the company's staff. Right now it seems like I'm just lining the pockets of wealthy executives and shareholders.

These days when I purchase a cup of coffee, what I'm really buying is access to a place—one where I can work, pause, people-watch, read a book or simply zone out. My cup's contents are often beside the point: When contemplating its purchase, I'm really wondering how consuming it in this place will make me feel.

In his discussion of how we transform space into special places, sociologist Thomas Gieryn emphasizes that place is "doubly constructed" in the minds of people who imbue its physicality with meaning. That meaning is how a spare retail space with a few tables and chairs gets elevated to a "home away from home." The pandemic raised both my expectations and my needs, and I make every effort to spend my money at these meaningful places. As a professor, I enjoy the solitude and autonomy that comes with my job, but even I get sick of myself, and walking to my favorite local coffee shops helps ward off the creep of afternoon depression.

Starbucks' profit-maximizing strategies abandoned customers like me long ago. A wave of store closures in the Bay Area, where I live, dislodged any remaining shred of brand loyalty. Many that remained removed significant portions of their seating or eliminated it altogether. And at the locations that do have it, good luck getting a chair or a coveted bathroom code before making your purchase.

So why go there when there's the Bean Bag Cafe on Divisadero Street, where I often see the evening counter person hug regular customers? There's no time for hugs at Starbucks, which doesn't have a store anywhere close to my home in East Oakland. Thankfully, small businesses like Cafe Cordoba fill this community need, serving as an oasis in this former café desert. Immaculately clean and lovingly decorated, this quaint coffee shop serves a diverse clientele that includes older adults, families with children, club members from the local Hell's Angels chapter and Oakland police officers. When sipping their cinnamon-infused café de olla from a hand-painted mug, it's easy to wonder: Who needs Starbucks anyway?

By STACY TORRES
Los Angeles Times

Stacy Torres, author of the forthcoming "At Home in the City: Growing Old in Urban America," is an assistant professor of sociology at UC San Francisco.

But in these times of increasing loneliness, distrust and political polarization, we desperately need places for neighboring. I could offer a slate of ideas to help Starbucks strengthen local connections. But my greater concern is supporting those small businesses that contribute to our social infrastructure without a corporation's financial backing. One important step is to expand retail tax credits and increase grants to small businesses, especially those that resurrect formerly vacant storefronts, planting the seeds for neighborhood revival.

I'm not worried about Starbucks' future. The chain's clearly not worried about me. But we can take some lessons from its corporate identity crisis to think about the public-private partnerships we want to nurture independently and collectively with our local businesses, big and small, so that we all feel welcomed with a seat at the table.

TRUMP

From page 6

Trump to exempt agricultural workers from deportation. Builders say mass deportation would worsen current labor shortages and drive up home costs even further.

The scenario brings to mind the 2004 mockumentary "A Day Without a Mexican," in which a mysterious shroud of fog descends on California and 14 million Latinos suddenly disappear, wreaking havoc on all sectors of the economy. Last summer, to celebrate the film's 20th anniversary, the filmmakers Sergio Arau and Yareli Arizmendi screened it around the country.

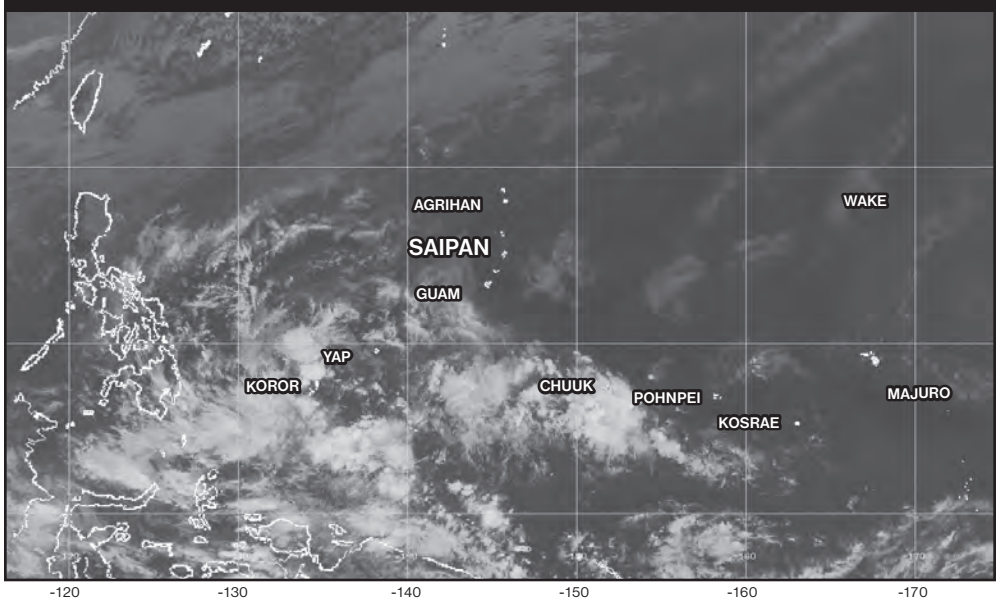
"When we did a screening a month ago," Arizmendi told my colleague Andrea Flores in July, "someone called me a prophet

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy. A 40 percent chance of showers.	Mostly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Mostly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 4:39 AM SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows a weak trough moving through the region this morning. This will bring a brief increase in cloud cover and showers. By the afternoon, conditions quiet down again before another weak trough arrives late tonight. Radar shows a cell or two that may bring moderate rain, but showers are expected to be generally shallow and fast-moving with minimal impacts expected, only adjusted cloud cover for today and tonight.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	84° / 77°
Yap	Cloudy	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 81°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Kosrae	Sunny	87° / 80°
Majuro	Sunny	86° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:35 AM	5:49 PM
Tuesday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Wednesday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Thursday	6:37 AM	5:50 PM
Friday	6:36 AM	5:51 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	7:15 AM	6:37 PM
Tuesday	-	8:15 AM	7:39 PM
Wednesday	-	9:08 AM	8:39 PM
Thursday	-	9:54 AM	9:34 PM
Friday	-	10:35 AM	10:26 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	79° / 66°
Beijing	Sunny	46° / 21°
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	64° / 61°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	78° / 65°
London	Showers	54° / 45°
Los Angeles	Sunny	65° / 42°
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	84° / 77°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	82° / 55°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	79° / 68°
New York	Partly Cloudy	45° / 30°
Osaka	Sunny	52° / 37°
Paris	Cloudy	50° / 45°
Busan	Sunny	48° / 32°
Rome	Sunny	50° / 34°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	62° / 51°
San Francisco	Sunny	57° / 42°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	43° / 30°
Tokyo	Sunny	52° / 34°
Washington, DC	Sunny	45° / 33°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
2:04 AM	Low Tide	-0.88
9:24 AM	High Tide	1.82
2:36 PM	Low Tide	1.18
7:09 PM	High Tide	1.83

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	1:20PM	4:00PM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

7C3218/2305	2:45AM	10:20PM	Daily via Incheon
UA076/183 Guam	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:30AM	6:25AM	Daily
7C3218	2:45AM	6:45AM	Daily from Dec 8
7C3212	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3552	3:55AM	7:20AM	3, 6 from Dec 25

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX77	3:05AM	5:55AM	1, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	5:30PM	10:05PM	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA156	00:40AM	6:25AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:40AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA156	00:40AM	8:45AM	3, 6 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM +1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3407	11:20PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3211	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:00PM	1:30AM+1	Daily
7C3217	8:10PM	1:40AM+1	Daily from Dec 8

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3551	9:25PM	2:50AM+1	2, 5 from Dec 25

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

HX76	6:25PM	1:35AM+1	4, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Faith, excellence, and service: AlumKnights achieve MPA milestone

Victoria Ann Camacho Deleon Guerrero, 2013 AlumKnight, and Zeno Camacho Deleon Guerrero Jr., 2017 AlumKnight, were awarded Master of Public Administration degrees from the University of Guam School of Business & Public Administration during a hooding ceremony at the Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Building in Susupe on Dec. 7, 2024. The ceremony and degree program were a collaborative effort between the University of Guam and the Northern Marianas College.

Victoria and Zeno were among 11 participants in the program's second CNMI cohort, which brought together professionals from both the public and private sector. The CNMI UOG MPA program "provides graduate students with a high caliber educational experience that prepares its aspirants to be leaders, managers, and analysts in public affairs, public administration, and public policy careers at the territorial, regional, federal, and international levels" (UOG website).

Victoria shared at the ceremony that she recently accepted a position with the CNMI Department of Corrections. "As our keynote speaker, delegate-elect Kimberlyn King-Hinds, emphasized, earning this degree is just the beginning of doing meaningful and impactful work for our Commonwealth," she noted. "I am grateful to my parents, partner, family, friends, and colleagues for their continued support, and I am eager to take on the next chapter ahead."

Zeno currently serves as vice principal at Mount Carmel School. "I have tremendous gratitude to everyone at MCS who supported me throughout this journey. Switching from being an educator by day to student by night was challenging but surprisingly refreshing," he shared. "Already, this program has made me more confident in tackling challenges as a first-year administrator." Zeno also shared during the ceremony that he has future plans to pursue a juris doctorate.

MCS

From left, Victoria Ann Camacho Deleon Guerrero, 2013 AlumKnight, and Zeno Camacho Deleon Guerrero, 2017 AlumKnight, were awarded Master of Public Administration degrees from the University of Guam School of Business & Public Administration.

MCS president John Blanco, a 1990 AlumKnight, was among those in attendance at the hooding ceremony. "I have had the honor and privilege of seeing both Victoria and Zeno grow as both students and later as colleagues at MCS, our alma mater," he mentioned. "They both exemplify the spirit of life-long learning and commitment to service we aim to nourish here at the school."

Mount Carmel School congratulates both Victoria and Zeno for their commendable achievements. MCS cannot wait to see what impact they make for MCS and the Commonwealth. Should any other AlumKnights have similar remarkable milestones to share, do not hesitate to get in touch with MCS at mcsmedia@mcsknights.com. MCS invites you to share your endeavors beyond our campus and celebrate your achievements with the MCS community. ***(PR)***

NMC launches innovation incubator program

The Northern Marianas College and the CNMI Small Business Development Center at NMC recently launched the CNMI Innovation Incubator Program.

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration, NMC initiative aims to foster innovation and support small business growth across the CNMI by providing essential resources to early-stage startups and small businesses.

The primary objective of the program is to stimulate innovation through entrepreneurship and aims to increase the number of small businesses and jobs. Key features of the program include expert mentorship and guidance, essential resources and amenities, a robust support network and community relationships, valuable funding opportunities, and a focus on sustainable success.

"This is an important milestone in NMC and the CNMI SBDC's ongoing efforts to empower small businesses, foster entrepreneurship, and drive innovation across our economy," said NMC president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero. "Small businesses truly are the lifeblood of any economy, contributing to both job creation for our residents and the diversity of our island community. We are excited to have this new Innovation Incubator Program bridge the gap between idea and execution, so we can cultivate a business environment that embraces creativity, promotes collaboration, and creates opportunities for everyone."

Cherese T. Palacios, the program manager, said that she is excited for the launch of the program. "As a small business owner myself, I understand the challenges that come with starting and sustaining a business in the CNMI," Palacios said. "At the Innovation Incubator, our mission is to support and uplift small business entrepreneurs by identifying funding opportunities, educational resources, and fostering a culture of development and growth through networking and collaborative efforts."

Nadine C. Deleon Guerrero, network director of the CNMI SBDC Network, added, "The program is designed not just to offer support but also to actively invest in our local entrepreneurs' futures. By offering essential resources, mentorship, and access to funding opportunities, we aim to spark innovation and to help build a stronger, more resilient economy."

The CNMI Innovation Incubator Program will serve as a central hub for entrepreneurs, offering a range of resources to support business development and expansion. By facilitating access to essential services and funding, the program aims to address the gap in centralized support for business growth in the CNMI and drive economic progress across the islands.

The application period for the CNMI Innovation Incubator Program will open in the coming months. Details on how to apply, along with key information and deadlines, will be announced in the coming weeks. Stay updated by following us on social media and checking our website for the latest information.

For more information about the CNMI Innovation Incubator Program, visit the microsite at www.cnmisbdc.com or follow us on social media @cnmisbdc (Instagram & Facebook) for updates on future events and initiatives. For inquiries, contact us at (670) 234-5498 ext. 9214/9215. ***(PR)***

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
NMHC IFB 2025-003

(This ad is paid by NMHC by HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: January 10, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

Purchase of Two (2) Preowned Pick Up Trucks

The bid package will be available on December 16, 2024, at the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net by clicking on the "Procurement Tab".

The provisions of the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

For any inquiries regarding this bid shall be submitted to Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net or facsimile at (670)234-9021, on or before December 27, 2024, no later than 10 a.m.

/s/ ZENIE P. MAFNAS
Corporate Director

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

Mariah Barcinas-Paul
P.O. Box 501606
Saipan, MP 96950
670-783-4688

Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Change of Name of:	] FCD CN CIVIL] ACTION NO.] 24-0443] **ORDER**
Mariah Manibusan Barcinas-Paul Petitioner	]

FOR GOOD CAUSE SHOWN, Petitioner's Motion to Consolidate Adoption Hearing and Change of Name Hearing is hereby **GRANTED/DENIED.** The Change of Name Hearing is rescheduled to December 16, 2024 at 1:30 pm.

Dated this 13th day of November, 2024 .

ASSOCIATE JUDGE

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Board of Directors
3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building
P.O. Box 501220 CK • Saipan, MP 96950-1220
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Facsimile: (670) 235-5131

Pursuant to the Open Government Act (1 CMC §9901 et seq), the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation ("CUC") Board of Directors hereby informs the general public that the Board will hold its **Regular Board Meeting** on **Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.** The meeting will be held in the CUC Conference Room, Room 17, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building. The following agenda will be considered, and public attendance is welcome.

AGENDA

I. Preliminary Matters
  A. Call to Order
  B. Roll Call
  C. Adoption of Agenda
  D. Adoption of Minutes
    I. November 25, 2024 Regular Board Meeting
    II. December 12, 2024 Special Board Meeting
  E.Correspondence
II. Management Reports
  A.Executive Director's Report
  B.Chief Financial Officer's Report
  C.Legal Counsel's Report
III. Committee Reports
  A. Personnel Committee
    I. 24-0001-CA
    II. 24-0002-CA
IV. Old Business
  A. Government and CHCC Receivables
  B. Privatization of Power Generation
  C. Renewable Energy Plans
  D. Integrated Resource Plan
  E. Status of the Cost of Service Study
  F. CUC Drug Policy
  G. CUC Classification & Compensation Plan
  H. CUC Travel Policy
  I. Decision on Appeal No. 24-001-BD Pursuant to NMIAC § 50-40-120(b)
V. New Business
  A. CUC Rota Ground Maintenance
VI. Public Comments*
VII. Executive Session**
VIII. Announcement

* In accordance with Public Law 8-41, additional agenda items may be added to the above listing only by a recorded vote of the majority members of the governing body.
** All interested persons are welcome to attend and submit written and oral testimony on the above agenda items. Public Comments are limited to 30 minutes and each remark is limited to three minutes.
*** Pursuant to 1 CMC §9912, the CUC Board of Directors may vote to meet at any time in executive session, to consult with the Legal Counsel on matters deemed privileged and confidential.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net
EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

This is to inform all Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC)-approved Contractors (including Tinian and Rota contractors) that we are currently updating our Approved Contractor Listing for calendar year 2025. In order for NMHC to extend your company's inclusion on our listing for another year, you must submit the documentations listed below before or by December 30, 2024. Those companies that are not on our list of approved contractors but wish to be included are likewise encouraged to submit the following:

1. Valid CNMI Business License
2. Current Financial Statements (certified by the principle executive officer and principle financial officer)
3. 2 Years Business Gross Revenue (BGR) Tax Returns
4. 2 Years Corporate Income Tax Returns (1120)
5. Clearance Letter from the Department of Labor
6. Certificate of Compliance from the Revenue & Taxation Office
7. Workmen's Compensation Policy
8. Name of Insurance Company(ies) Currently Dealing With
9. A list of on-going/completed projects showing name of project, start and completion dates, and contract amounts
10. At least three (3) reference letters from owners of the completed projects
11. List of vendors and suppliers and at least three reference letters from them (CONSTRUCTION QUARRY, READY-MIX CEMENT & HARDWARE STORES)
12. Company background
13. Articles of Incorporation & Company By-Laws, if applicable
14. Annual Report (Registrar of Corporations)
15. Registration on the System for Award Management (SAM) official U.S. Government website and provide Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

NMHC encourages Minority and Women-Owned Businesses (MBE/WBE) to participate in this Request for Qualifications and that they will be afforded full opportunity to participate and will not be discriminated against on grounds of race, color, national origin, political affiliation, creed, sex, religion, age, familial status, or disability status.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

/S/ ZENIE P. MAFNAS
CORPORATE DIRECTOR

World

OVER HIS MARTIAL LAW ORDER

S. Korea's parliament votes to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea's parliament on Saturday impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his stunning and short-lived martial law decree, a move that ended days of political paralysis but set up an intense debate over Yoon's fate, as jubilant crowds roared to celebrate another defiant moment in the country's resilient democracy.

The National Assembly passed the motion 204-85. Yoon's presidential powers and duties were subsequently suspended and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, the country's No. 2 official, took over presidential powers later Saturday.

The Constitutional Court has up to 180 days to determine whether to dismiss Yoon as president or restore his powers. If he's thrown out of office, a national election to choose his successor must be held within 60 days.

It was the second National Assembly vote on Yoon's impeachment after ruling party lawmakers boycotted the first floor vote last Saturday. Some People Power Party lawmakers had since said they would vote for Yoon's impeachment as public protests intensified and his approval rating plummeted.

National Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik said Yoon's impeachment was an outcome driven by "the people's ardent desire for democracy, courage and dedication."

Hundreds of thousands of people gathered near the parliament roared in jubilation, waved banners and brandished colorful K-pop glow sticks, as a lead activist shouted on stage, "We have preserved the constitutional order!"

"The impeachment has been done in line with the people's demand and I hope a decision to dismiss Yoon Suk Yeol will come as soon as possible," said Kim Su-bong, a protester. "I'm very happy and moved. I view it as a victory of the people."

In a central Seoul plaza, another huge crowd gathered supporting Yoon, but they grew subdued after hearing he had been impeached.

The acting leader bolsters the country's security posture

Yoon issued a statement saying he would "never give up" and calling for officials to maintain stability in government functions during what he described as a "temporary" pause of his presidency.

"I will carry with me all the criticisms, encouragement and support directed toward me, and I will continue to do my utmost for the country until the very last moment," Yoon said.

Yoon's Dec. 3 imposition of martial law, the first of its kind in more than four decades in South Korea, lasted only six hours, but has caused massive political tumult, halted diplomatic activities and rattled financial markets. Yoon was forced to lift his decree after parliament unanimously voted to overturn it.

Han, the acting leader, ordered the military to bolster its security posture to prevent North Korea from launching provocations by miscalculation. Han asked the foreign minister to inform other countries that South Korea's major external policies remain unchanged, and the finance minister to work to minimize potential negative impacts on the economy by the political turmoil, according to Han's office.

MARIANAS BEACH RESORT
(Formerly Hyatt)
Merry Christmas
Christmas Day Brunch
Wednesday, December 25 | 11:00 - 14:00
Raw Bar
Ramen Live Station
Free Flow Sparkling, Red & White Wine & Draft Beer
15% CNMI Discount
Don't Miss Out!
AD $70
CH $35
Christmas Special Staycation
Tuesday, December 24 - Wednesday, December 25
Add $10 For Breakfast up to 2 People
Add $10 for Cocktail Hour up to 2 People
A Romantic Christmassy atmosphere
** Check-in 3pm, Check out 12pm
** Exclusive for CNMI & Guam Residents ONLY
Stay with us!
START FROM
$99
+15% TAX
Christmas Eve Dinner
Tuesday, December 24 | 18:00 - 21:00
Carving station
Teppan Live station
Free Flow Sparkling, Red & White Wine & Draft Beer
15% CNMI Discount
Book Now!
AD $70
CH $35
FOR RESERVATIONS, PLEASE CALL (670) 234-1234

A diminished Hezbollah made even weaker by toppling of Assad

BEIRUT (AP)—A severely hobbled Hezbollah was in no position to help defend former Syrian President Bashar Assad, a longtime ally, from the lightning-fast insurgency that toppled him. With Assad gone, the militant group based in Lebanon is even weaker.

Hezbollah was dealt a major blow during 14 months of war with Israel. The toppling of Assad, who had strong ties to Iran, has now crippled its ability to bounce back by cutting off a vital weapons-smuggling route through Syria.

Hezbollah officials are deeply concerned but defiant.

"What is happening in Syria is a major, dangerous and new change, and to know why this happened needs evaluation," Hassan Fadlallah, a Lebanese lawmaker who represents Hezbollah's political wing, said during a speech at a funeral for militants killed by Israel. "Whatever is happening in Syria, despite its dangers, will not weaken us."

Analysts say the diminishment of Hezbollah will have big consequences for Lebanon, where for decades it has been a major political player—and for Iran, which has relied on the group as one of several proxy forces projecting power across the Middle East. It is also a game-changer for Israel, whose nemesis on its northern border is now at its most vulnerable point in decades.

The Assad dynasty, which ruled Syria for half a century with an iron fist, played a crucial role in empowering Hezbollah, which was founded in the early 1980s by Iranian advisers who came through Syria. In addition to being a conduit for Iranian weapons, Syria also was a place where Hezbollah trained fighters and manufactured its own weapons.

As Hezbollah grew more powerful, it became a force Assad could rely on for protection in times of crisis. Hezbollah sent thousands of fighters to bolster Assad's forces when a civil war broke out in 2011.

As insurgents swept across Syria in early December and took the city of Homs—a stone's throw from a Syrian border town where Hezbollah had a presence—many expected the militants to put up a fierce fight. After all, they did just that in 2013, preventing Assad's opponents from advancing into Damascus.

Life & Style

UNIQUE AMONG 'PERSON OF THE YEAR' DESIGNEES

Donald Trump gets a fact-check from *Time* magazine

By DAVID BAUDER
AP Media Writer

Time magazine gave Donald Trump something it has never done for a Person of the Year designee: a lengthy fact-check of claims he made in an accompanying interview.

The fact-check accompanies a transcript of what the president-elect told the newsmagazine's journalists. Described as a "12 minute read," it calls into question 15 separate statements that Trump made.

It was the second time Trump earned the Time accolade; he also won in 2016, the first year he was elected president. *Time* editors said it wasn't a particularly hard choice over other finalists Kamala Harris, Elon Musk, Benjamin Netanyahu and Kate Middleton.

Time said Friday that no other Person of the Year has been fact-checked in the near-century that the magazine has annually written about the figure that has had the greatest impact on the news. But it has done the same for past interviews with the likes of Joe Biden, Netanyahu and Trump.

AP

President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a *Time* magazine Person of the Year event at the New York Stock Exchange, Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, in New York.

Such corrections have been a sticking point for Trump and his team in the past, most notably when ABC News did it during his only debate with Democrat Kamala Harris this fall. There was no immediate response to a request for comment on Friday.

In the piece, *Time* called into question statements Trump made about border security, autism and the size of a crowd at one of his rallies. When the president-elect talked about the "massive" mandate he had received from voters, Time pointed out that former President Barack Obama won more electoral votes the two times he had run for president.

The magazine also questioned Trump's claim that he would do interviews with anyone who asked during the campaign, if he had the time. The candidate rejected a request to speak to CBS' "60 Minutes," the magazine said.

"In the final months of his campaign, Trump prioritized interviews with podcasts over mainstream media," reporters Simmone Shah and Leslie Dickstein wrote.

Woman accusing Jay-Z and Sean 'Diddy' Combs of sexual assault acknowledges inconsistencies

A woman who accused rappers Jay-Z and Sean "Diddy" Combs of sexually assaulting her when she was 13 at an awards show after-party has acknowledged certain inconsistencies in her story, while her lawyer said he will continue to vet her claims.

The unnamed woman described being driven from Rochester, New York, to New York City for the MTV Video Music Awards in 2000 and then Combs' limo driver offering her a ride to an after-party, NBC News reported on Friday. She claimed she spoke with musicians Benji Madden and his brother at the party, and her father picked her up after the alleged assault.

But a representative of the Maddens confirmed to NBC that they were on tour in the Midwest during the VMAs, while her father said he doesn't remember the drive home of more than five hours. The woman's friend who reportedly drove her to the awards has since died, NBC reported.

The woman had first sued Combs, alleging she was raped at an after-party, and then amended the lawsuit Sunday to include a new allegation that Jay-Z, whose legal name is Shawn Carter, also was at the party and participated in the sexual assault.

Jay-Z said in a statement that the article proves Tony Buzbee, a personal injury lawyer in Houston, filed a false complaint against him for money and fame.

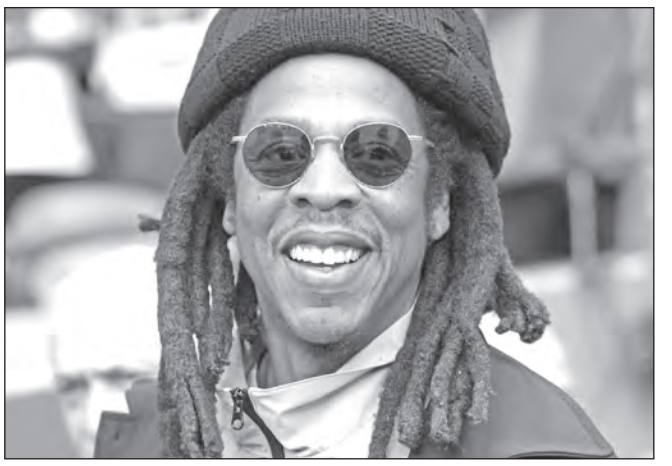
"This incident didn't happen and yet he filed it in court and doubled down in the press," he said. "True Justice is coming. We fight FROM victory, not FOR victory. This was over before it began. This 1-800 lawyer doesn't realize it yet, but, soon."

Buzbee told The Associated in an email that if someone raises a new issue which didn't previously exist, her legal team's job is to continue collecting facts and evidence.

Jay-Z's attorney, Alex Spiro, asked the court to dismiss the case, saying in a statement, "It is stunning that a lawyer would not only file such a serious complaint without proper vetting, but would make things worse by further peddling this false story in the press."

The woman admitted to making "some mistakes" when recalling that night, but said she stands by her allegations.

Combs' attorney, Teny R. Geragos, said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press on Saturday: "Yesterday, a lawyer admitted that over 50 people falsely claimed to be victims. Today, for the second time this week, a Buzbee plaintiff has been exposed. This is the beginning of the end of this shameful money grab."



AP

Jay-Z smiles ahead of the Champions League final soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and Real Madrid at Wembley stadium in London, Saturday, June 1, 2024.

The litigation is part of a wave of sexual assault lawsuits levied against Combs as the hip-hop mogul remains in custody in New York awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges.

The unnamed woman said that while she was in the limousine, she was asked to sign a nondisclosure document. Once at the party, the lawsuit said, she took a drink that made her feel "woozy and lightheaded" and went into a bedroom to lie down.

She said Combs and Jay-Z then barged into the room, along with another unnamed celebrity, and raped her. The woman said she eventually escaped the room, fled the house and called for a ride from a nearby gas station.

Jay-Z, a 24-time Grammy award winning rapper, producer and music mogul, anonymously sued Buzbee last month, alleging he was attempting to blackmail the rapper by threatening to make the rape allegation public if he did not agree to a legal settlement. Jay-Z said Buzbee sent a letter to his lawyer appearing to seek a settlement, which had the "opposite effect" on him. ***(AP)***

Husband's holiday cards undermine wife's grudge

DEAR ABBY: Several members of my husband's family let us down badly by not attending our daughter's wedding. They had various work and other family obligations near the date of our event. "Save the Date" cards had been sent out six months prior, but we were apparently lower on their priority list. I expressed to my husband my desire to not send holiday cards this year because I no longer feel good about these family members.

Then, while I was traveling for work, he bought cards, printed a letter with pictures, signed it from both of us and sent it to most of his family and some of our mutual friends. The first I heard about it was from a friend thanking me for the card and pictures a month later. I discussed it with my husband and got an apology, but I'm still shocked and saddened. What do you think?

STILL MIFFED

DEAR STILL MIFFED: Although you didn't want to send holiday cards to the relatives who skipped your daughter's wedding, apparently your husband didn't feel the same way. He was entitled to do what he did. Repeat after me: A wedding invitation is not a command performance. Now let it go.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I'm estranged from my nephew and feel bad that our relationship has deteriorated. We live in different states. He has a mental illness and refuses treatment.

As a professional who is respected at work and at home, I am distressed that my nephew is aggressive and demeaning to me in public and in private. How can I get onto a path of reconciliation, and how does one know when self-protection is the only reasonable action?

SAD UNCLE IN FLORIDA

DEAR UNCLE: You are fortunate to be geographically distant from your mentally ill nephew. It is not up to you to make amends with him. Until he receives psychiatric treatment for his illness, his behavior won't moderate and there will be no reconciliation. In a case like this, self-protection is the most reasonable action.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My boyfriend and I received a generous gift card from my brother and sister-in-law to a restaurant we love. Next week, the four of us are going to dinner together there. My question is about the etiquette of using such a gift card. Should we use it that night or plan not to use it? If we use it and there is excess, should we pay toward my brother's bill? I know my brother won't be bothered or offended either way, but I'm curious about the "correct" way to handle this, and I'd appreciate your advice.

WONDERING IN THE SOUTH

DEAR WONDERING: If my mail is any indication, some folks become offended if someone they are splitting the bill with uses a gift card rather than a credit card or cash. That's why it never hurts to ask that question of the person who is joining you BEFORE going to the restaurant.

■■■

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

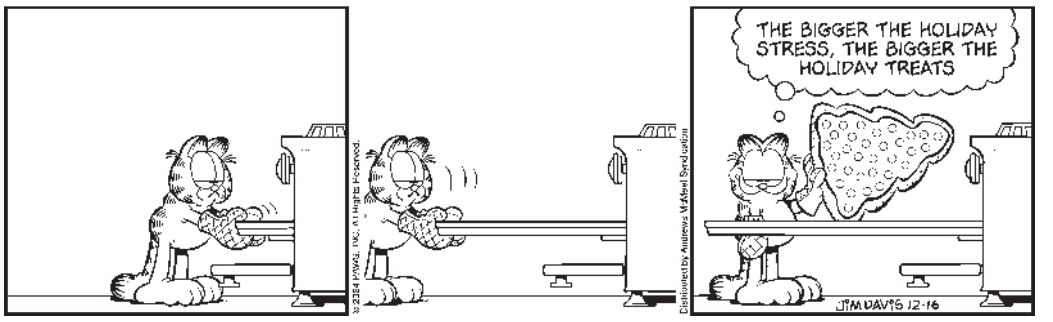
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

WHEN ARE WE GOING TO GET A CHRISTMAS TREE?
OH, I DUNNO. PROBABLY A LITTLE AFTER NEW YEAR'S.
AFTER NEW YEAR??
SURE. WE CAN JUST GO UP THE STREET AND PICK THE BEST TREE FROM THE NEIGHBORS' DRIVEWAYS.
WHAT?!
SOMETIMES THERE'S STILL TINSEL ON THE TREE TOO, SO YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO DECORATE IT! WE'LL SAVE TIME AND MONEY!
OK, WHAT DID YOUR DAD TELL YOU THIS TIME?

Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WHAT IF I PAINTED ALL THE BASEBOARDS?
SERIOUSLY?
YEAH. I'VE HEARD YOU SAYING THEY NEED IT.
IT'LL SCORE ME MAJOR POINTS WITH THE FAT MAN IN THE RED SUIT.
BIG-BONED! I MEANT BIG-BONED MAN!
MAN. YOU MIGHT NEED TO PAINT THE DOORS, TOO.
12-16

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

HOW IS THE FOOD?
TERRIBLE! HOW DID YOU GUYS GET THOSE 5-STAR REVIEWS?
THEY MOSTLY LIKE OUR CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE URGENT CARE CLINIC.
12-16

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Ruckus
4 Patient's need, for short
7 Research sites
11 Third son
13 "La-la" lead-in
14 "Bearded" bloom
15 "Toodle-oo!"
16 Sock part
17 Fixed look
18 Take as one's own
20 Prepare potatoes
22 Trench
24 Like nobles
28 Chapel recitations
32 English county
33 Diana of "The Avengers"
34 "You bet!"
36 Relaxed state
37 Ancient theater
39 1972 Liza Minnelli movie
41 Prepared potatoes
43 Not 'neath
44 Western tribe
46 Chopin piece
50 Galvanizing matter
53 Luau souvenir
55 Black, in verse
56 Out of control
57 Doja Cat's "Planet —"
58 Say it isn't so
59 Like slasher films
60 Luggage tags, e.g.
61 Irish actor Stephen

DOWN
1 Nick and Nora's pooch
2 Conked out
3 Director Preminger
4 Youngster
5 Weaving machine
6 Swindler
7 Carefree
8 Celestial altar
9 Occupation, for short
10 Compass dir.
12 Carefree
19 No-win situation?
21 Malia, to Sasha
23 Attempt
25 Deceitful person
26 Gaelic
27 Bug spray ingredient
28 Item on stage
29 Carousel, for one
30 Baseball's Tommie
31 Moment
35 — Paulo
38 Volleyball barrier
40 Spell-off
42 New —, India
45 Feeder filler
47 Taxi alternative
48 Finito
49 "May It Be" singer
50 Sharp turn
51 Texter's "I think"
52 Neither mate
54 Apr. addressee

Solution time: 21 mins.

W	A	I	S	T		J	I	B		M	O	D
E	M	C	E	E		I	R	A		E	D	U
S	P	I	L	L		C	H	C	L	E	S	
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A	S	S	I	S	I		O	N	I	O	N	S
		I	R	A	C	Y		I	H	O	I	
G	O	P	R	O		L	C	O		A	N	Y
A	C	A	I		Z	O	D	I	A	C		
M	U	S	C	L	E	S		L	I	L	A	C
U	L	T		D	R	E		E	R	E	C	T
T	I	S		L	O	S		R	C	S	T	S

Last Friday's answer 12-16

1	2	3	■	■	4	5	6	■	7	8	9	10
11			12	■	13			■	14			
15				■	16			■	17			
18				19	■	20		21		■	■	■
■	■	■	22		23	■	24			25	26	27
28	29	30				31	■	32				
33				■	34		35	■	36			
37				38	■	39		40				
41					42	■	43			■	■	■
■	■	■	44			45	■	46		47	48	49
50	51	52		■	53		54	■	55			
56				■	57			■	58			
59				■	60			■	■	61		

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Hallee Hirsh, 37; Benjamin Bratt, 61; Sam Robards, 63; Billy Gibbons, 75.

Happy Birthday: Communicate, test theories and demonstrate restraint and genuine interest in what's happening around you. Consider what's trending and how you can adapt and turn what you know and do into something vibrant and lasting. Refuse to give in or follow anyone putting pressure on you. Do what satisfies your soul, and you'll discover the path to happiness. Personal growth and gain are within reach if you follow your heart. Your numbers are 6, 15, 24, 29, 32, 38, 43.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Discipline and hard work will pay dividends. Focus on home, family and turning what you have and can do into profits. Refuse to let emotions swell when your energy needs channeling to ensure you get your desired results. Approach a challenge with hope, and something good will transpire. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Gather the facts and assemble a plan that suits your needs. It's better to take the road that's in your best interest instead of trying to accommodate others at your expense. Speak from the heart; don't take it personally if someone opposes you. Protect against injury and illness. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* You'll have plenty to think about and some terrific ideas to tackle whatever you encounter today. Live in the moment and address every matter as it arises instead of shelving, obsessing and stressing yourself into panic mode. Assess problems and get back on course. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* A unique approach to work-related matters will help you prepare for new beginnings or get on a path that leads to something that excites you. A passionate plea will help win favors and encourage you to dismiss what's no longer working. Head in a direction that offers financial opportunity. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Pick up the pace and put your back into every move you make. Think less, do more; the result will make you feel good about your choices. Mix business with pleasure, and you'll discover that you have more in common with someone who can help you advance than you realize. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Consider your current situation and the changes that will ease stress and help you live your way. Reach out to those heading down a similar path who are willing to work alongside you to reach a lifestyle that suits your needs. Say no to bullies and do what soothes your soul. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Get involved in events that offer insightful options. An open mind leads to food for thought and puts you on a course that helps you separate logic from impracticality. Take a critical look at your current lifestyle and adjust what's necessary to ensure you look, feel and do your best. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Take better care of yourself. Refuse to jeopardize your health by attending a risky event. Pay attention to what makes you happy and adjust your life to fulfill your needs. A unique lifestyle change that nourishes your soul will make a difference in how you flourish. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* In the interest of all those you love, take a moment to consider what's best for everyone, and make it your mission to adapt and make amends where necessary. It's the time of the year to reflect, revise what's not working and to bridge the gap when needed. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22- Jan. 19):* Make your feelings about someone or something clear. Honesty is the best policy if you want to reach your personal or professional goal. A change at home looks promising if you are fearless in doing things in an avant-garde manner. A little charm will go a long way. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Pull out all the stops and finish what you start. A high-energy approach to home, relationships and tidying up loose ends will put your mind at ease, giving way to an enjoyable end to a hectic year. Refuse to let what others do interfere with what's important to you. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Stand alone if necessary. You must fulfill your needs if you want to be happy. A heartfelt refusal to follow someone down a path that doesn't suit your needs or is excessive will ease stress. Observe, but don't buy into someone else's dream. Do what makes you happy. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are innovative, unique and demonstrative. You are contemplative and proactive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		9		1		6		
7		6	9	8		1		4
				2			9	
	9		7				8	
						4	5	7
8	4	7	5	3	6		1	
5	7		2	6				
	3	4	8		1		7	9
	2		3				6	1

Difficulty: ★ 12/16

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's Answer

1	5	4	6	3	7	8	9	2
8	7	9	5	4	2	3	1	6
2	3	6	1	8	9	5	4	7
7	4	5	9	6	1	2	8	3
6	2	3	4	7	8	9	5	1
9	8	1	3	2	5	7	6	4
3	9	7	8	1	6	4	2	5
4	1	8	2	5	3	6	7	9
5	6	2	7	9	4	1	3	8

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Difficulty: ★★★★ 12/13

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

SYNTHETIC MOTOR OIL **Solution: 10 letters**

E	B	A	D	D	I	T	I	V	E	S	N	E	M	A
N	N	L	E	R	U	P	E	T	R	O	L	E	U	M
D	O	A	E	V	I	R	D	A	L	C	R	T	I	I
C	I	T	L	N	C	L	C	L	Y	U	O	V	N	L
E	T	U	S	P	D	A	A	C	T	M	A	E	A	E
R	C	U	L	I	N	G	R	C	O	L	K	H	T	A
U	U	B	R	F	P	O	A	B	V	I	L	I	I	G
T	R	U	C	K	T	F	I	E	O	A	F	C	T	E
A	T	A	C	O	U	L	L	T	W	N	U	L	E	S
R	S	L	M	N	E	U	R	N	A	D	E	E	P	S
E	N	U	A	O	C	E	M	E	A	T	L	N	Y	Ⓕ
P	O	M	B	E	T	O	L	F	L	A	S	H	T	Ⓤ
M	C	R	L	L	W	C	T	S	D	I	E	S	E	Ⓛ
E	U	O	I	E	Y	R	O	T	A	R	O	B	A	Ⓛ
T	M	F	R	I	C	T	I	O	N	O	G	A	W	G

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Additive, Automobile, Blend, Carbon, Cars, Clean, Cold, Construction, Diesel, Drive, Filter, Flash, Fluid, Formula, Friction, Fuel, Full, Gallon, Gas Station, Kits, Laboratory, Lawn Mower, Manufacture, Mileage, Molecule, Motorcycle, Petroleum, Piston, Plane, Pure, Speed, Temperature, Titanium, Truck, Turbo, Type, Valve, Vehicle, Wagon

Last Friday's answer : Hardcourt

The NEW **Volume 77** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com. or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Giannis, Bucks top Hawks, earn spot in NBA Cup finals

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points and was an assist away from a triple-double, Damian Lillard added 25 and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Atlanta Hawks 110-102 on Saturday to earn a spot in the NBA Cup championship game.

Antetokounmpo finished with 14 rebounds, nine assists and four blocks for the Bucks, who improved to 11-1 all-time in NBA Cup games—the only loss coming in last year's semifinals.

Brook Lopez scored 16 for Milwaukee.

Trae Young had 35 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds for the Hawks, who got 15 points and 10 rebounds from Jalen Johnson and 15 points from De'Andre Hunter.

Young drew 11 fouls in the game, a season-high. He drew 10 fouls in two other games this season; the Hawks won both of those. Since Young joined the NBA, he's drawn at least 10 fouls in a game 52 times. Every other Hawk, combined, in that span has done it once.

Antetokounmpo was brilliant, shooting 10 of 15 from the field and 12 of 18 from the foul line. And Bobby Portis provided his usual boost off the bench with 10 points and nine rebounds in 23 minutes.

Antetokounmpo blocked an alley-oop dunk try by Capela at the rim with 2:35 left, preserving what was a five-point Bucks lead.

Going back to last season, including playoffs, Milwaukee had lost 20 consecutive games when trailing entering the fourth quarter. The Bucks trailed 83-82 going into the fourth on Saturday.

THUNDER 111, ROCKETS 96

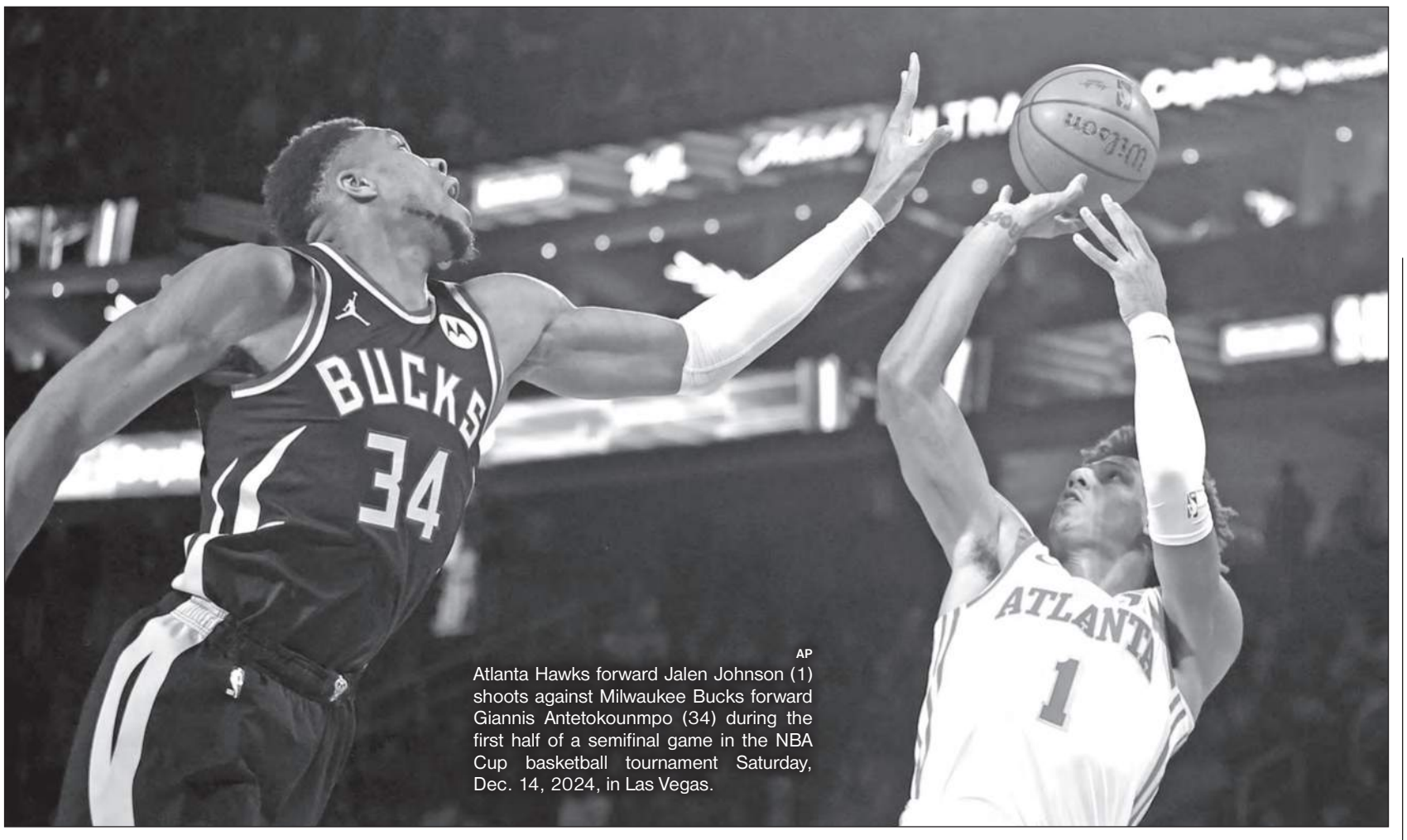
LAS VEGAS (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 20 of his 32 points in the second half, and Oklahoma City pulled away to defeat Houston Rockets and advance to the NBA Cup championship.

The Thunder take a five-game winning streak into Tuesday night's final against the Bucks. Milwaukee defeated the Atlanta Hawks 110-102 in the Eastern Conference semifinal. The title game does not count in the league standings.

Isaiah Hartenstein added 21 points for the Thunder, Jalen Williams scored 20 and Luguentz Dort finished with 19 points and nine rebounds.

Amen Thompson led Houston with 19 points, one of six Rockets in double figures, and Alperen Sengun had 13 points and 11 rebounds.

The Rockets and Thunder have two of the three best records in the Western Conference, making Saturday's second semifinal a potential playoff preview.



AP

Atlanta Hawks forward Jalen Johnson (1) shoots against Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo (34) during the first half of a semifinal game in the NBA Cup basketball tournament Saturday, Dec. 14, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Does the NBA Cup need star power or does Las Vegas sell itself?

LAS VEGAS (AP)—The league caught a major break last season when the Lakers made the inaugural NBA In-Season Tournament semifinals and then won the title.

Las Vegas is a Lakers town and the city is a four-hour drive from Los Angeles, so T-Mobile Arena was sold out for what was essentially a home game when the LeBron James-led Lakers cruised past the upstart Indiana Pacers 123-109.

The first season of Commissioner Adam Silver's great experiment couldn't have gone much smoother for the league, which is back with the renamed NBA Cup. But the Lakers won't be back, and also missing is what would have been another major draw. Stephen Curry and the Golden State Warriors came up just short of making the semifinals a controversial one-point loss to the Houston Rockets on Wednesday night.

That doesn't mean there won't be star power in Saturday's semifinals. Former two-time NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo and this season's second-best bet in Shai Gilgeous-Alexander will be the featured names.

Whether they drive sell-out business when the closest teams are at least a two-hour flight is the question.

"You always want star power because I think it adds to the intrigue and mystery of any event," said Brendan Bussmann, managing partner of Las Vegas-based B Global Advisors consulting firm. "That said, Vegas is Vegas and it has its own star power within itself. Just having and hosting that tournament continues to grow in a positive way not just for the destination, but for the NBA."

Playing a short walk away from the neon lights of Las Vegas Boulevard is why the NBA decided to play a neutral-site event here, knowing it had as potential customers not only the metropolitan area of about 2.3 million people but also a sliver of the roughly 40 million annual tourists.

However, Ticketmaster showed as of Thursday night that plenty of tickets remained for Saturday's Eastern Conference semifinals between Milwaukee and Atlanta and Western Conference foes Houston and Oklahoma City as well as Tuesday's championship game.

Secondary-market ticketing site Vivid Seats listed tickets as low as $17 for the Eastern semifinal, $30 for the West and $61 for the title game.

NBA officials said an extra day was added between the quarterfinals and semis to at least partly allow fans interested in traveling more time to plan. An extra day also was added between the semifinals and final to make it more of an overall experience than just the games.

Plus, this year's semifinals are on a weekend as compared to the afternoon weekday game last season between the Bucks and Pacers that drew a small crowd. The Lakers-Pelicans game, which was played that night, attracted a much larger gathering.

"We are pacing consistent with last year and we are getting a lot of momentum overnight," Kelly Flatow, NBA executive vice president of global events, said Thursday morning. "We saw a lot more people visiting the access website. We're driving people to NBAevents.com, and we're really optimistic about what we see for Saturday and then certainly leading into the championship on Tuesday."

She said the league reached out to Falcons fans group of about 2,500 who will be in Las Vegas for Atlanta's game Monday night against the Raiders and offered ticket packages to the games and ancillary events.

The NBA added more elements this year that include interactive activities, a high school basketball event featuring some of the nation's top prospects and a celebrity golf tournament.

But NBA officials also said the play on the court in the knockout games leading up to the semifinals underscored the increased intensity not only among the players but the fans as well, taking on more of a March Madness feel in December.

"Obviously, the notion of this tournament is it's different from an 82-game regular season or rounds of playoffs of seven games per round," said Evan Wasch, NBA senior vice president of basketball strategy and analytics. "When you play a seven-game playoff series, the best teams are highly likely to rise to the top. But with a four-game group stage and a single-elimination knockout round, really anything can happen."

That uncertain nature is why the defending champion Celtics or Western Conference champs Mavericks won't be in Las Vegas this weekend.

NBA officials hope that won't matter.

And maybe it won't. Maybe Las Vegas itself is enough of a sell, and fans from 12 countries and 30 states already have signed up for NBA Experience packages that include game tickets.

Warriors coach Steve Kerr certainly wanted to be in Las Vegas and was irate over a late loose-ball foul that led to the winning free throws in a 91-90 loss to the Rockets.

"I'm pissed off," Kerr said after the game. "I wanted to go to Las Vegas. We wanted to win the Cup."

Schroder set to be traded by Brooklyn to Golden State, AP source says

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Golden State is acquiring point guard Dennis Schroder in a trade with the Brooklyn Nets in exchange for injured forward De'Anthony Melton, a person with knowledge of the agreement said Saturday.

The trade is expected to be finalized Sunday when league rules allow certain moves to be made. The Nets also receiving a package of second-round draft picks, said the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal still needs league approval.

ESPN first reported the agreement.

Schroder is averaging 18.4 points and 6.6 assists this season for the Nets, who are 10th in the Eastern Conference. But the trade doesn't give them any on-court help this year: Melton is out for the remainder of the season while recovering from surgery to repair his left ACL.

By league rule, Melton could not be traded before Sunday.

The move gives the Warriors, who are fifth in the Western Conference at 14-10, another shooter to pair alongside all-time 3-point leader Stephen Curry. Schroder is making 2.5 3-pointers per game this season and shooting 39% from beyond the arc—both career-bests.

Golden State will become Schroder's eighth team in 12 NBA seasons. He had stints with Atlanta, Oklahoma City, the Los Angeles Lakers, Boston, Toronto and Houston before joining the Nets. He also helped lead Germany to the 2023 Basketball World Cup title.

Rams get 4 field goals to beat 49ers in a sloppy game

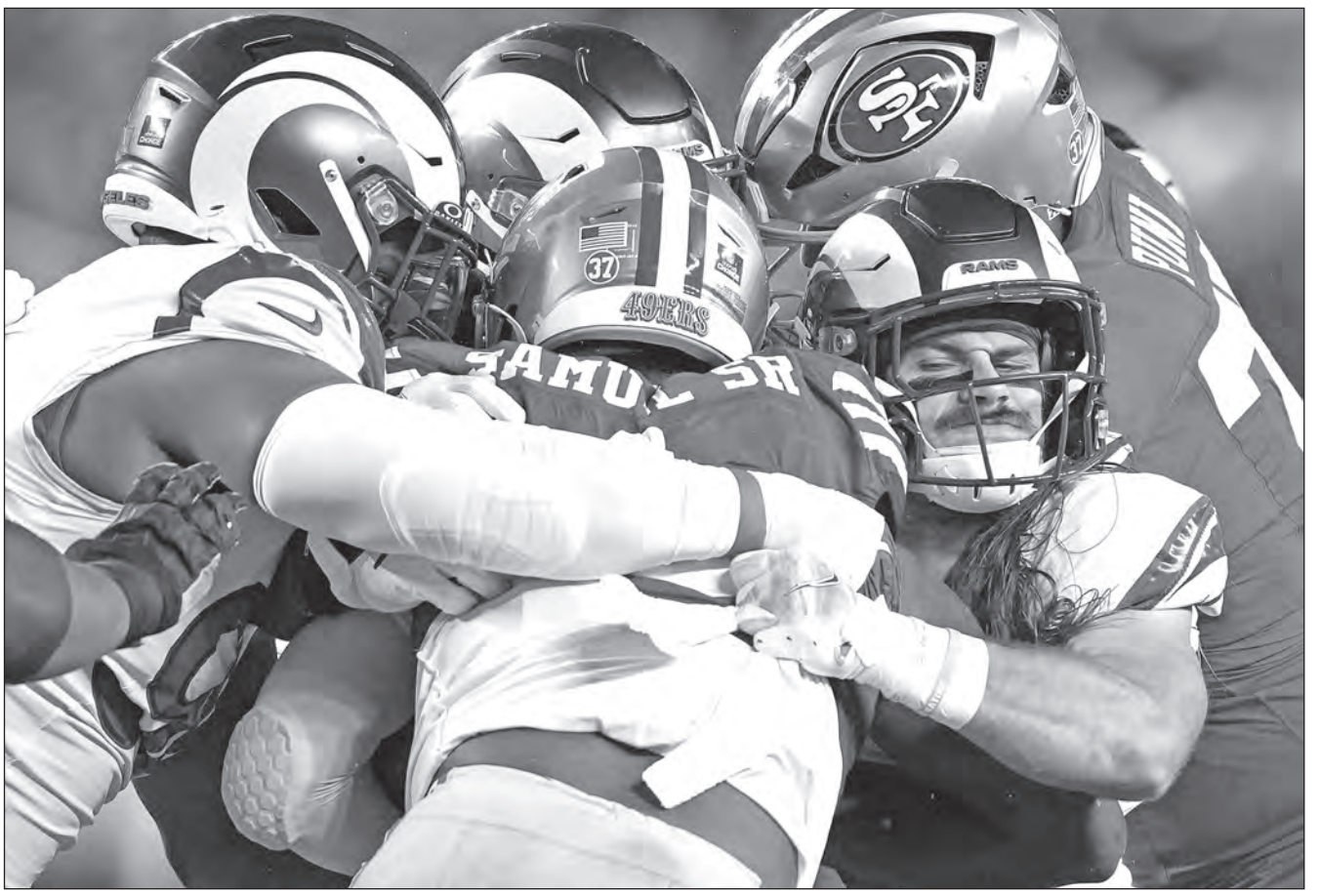
SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP)—Four nights after winning the highest-scoring game of the NFL season, the Los Angeles Rams won the only game this year that didn't have a touchdown.

Joshua Karty kicked four field goals and the Rams survived a slugfest a week after winning a shootout, beating the San Francisco 49ers 12-6 on Thursday night in a key game in the NFC West race.

"What's really cool is this team has found a bunch of different ways to be able to win football games," coach Sean McVay said. "You come off a 44-42 game the other day and then you win 12-6. Our group did what they needed to do to be able to get it done."

The Rams (8-6) followed up the high-scoring win over Buffalo by winning for the seventh time in nine games following a 1-4 start. The Rams moved within a half-game of division-leading Seattle. Los Angeles won a game without a touchdown for the first time since 2016.

The 49ers (5-8) led 6-3 heading into the fourth quarter but came up short, dealing a major blow to the dwindling playoff hopes for the defending NFC champions.



AP

San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Deebo Samuel Sr., center, is tackled by Los Angeles Rams linebacker Christian Rozeboom, front right, and others during the first half of an NFL football game in Santa Clara, Calif., Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024.

This marked the fourth time this season that the Niners lost to a division opponent after leading by at least three points in the fourth quarter, making them the first team to do that since New England in 2000 in coach Bill Belichick's first season with the Patriots.

"It was the story of the year," linebacker Fred Warner said. "Just not doing enough to win games. Not playing complementary. Just coming out a little too short."

Karty capped a 17-play drive with a game-tying 23-yard field goal early in the fourth quarter and then hit a 27-yarder after Matthew Stafford connected on a 51-yard pass to Puka Nacua.

Karty made all four kicks after missing four in the past five games of his rookie season.

"He's steady," McVay said. "He's consistent. He's kind of unflappable."

The Niners then drove into field-goal range but Brock Purdy was intercepted on a deep pass into the end zone by Darious Williams, helping the Rams secure their first series sweep against the 49ers since 2018.

Stafford then led a clock-killing drive that was capped by Karty's fourth field goal with 18 seconds to play. Stafford went 16 for 27 for 160 yards, with 137 of those yards coming after halftime when the heavy rain stopped.

"In the second half, the weather was good enough to do it all," Stafford said. "We had the feeling that that was the kind of way this game was going to be played and it's going to have to be one of those games. We scored 44 four nights ago and come out here and score 12 but they both count for one."

Purdy finished 14 for 31 for 142 yards as the Niners failed to score a touchdown in a game for the first time since 2019.

The first half was played in a downpour and it had a major impact on the offensive performances with neither team able to move the ball.

The Rams had no first downs on their first four drives for the first time since 2013 before getting a late field goal to tie the game. The Niners went three-and-out three times and got one field goal.

The teams combined for 11 punts, nine first downs and 197 yards four days after they both had season highs in points.

The rain mostly stopped at halftime but the offenses still struggled.

NFL will consider replay assist for facemask penalties and other plays

IRVING, Texas (AP)—The NFL will consider expanding replay assist to include facemask penalties and other plays.

Officials have missed several obvious facemask penalties this season, including two in a three-week span during Thursday night games.

"When we see it, because I see it like yourselves and the fans, I have an opportunity to see it from a different angle and see it from a slow-mo," NFL executive Troy Vincent said Wednesday at the league's winter meetings.

"When you think about the position of where the officials are, things are happening so fast. Sometimes the facemask can be the same color as the gloves. There's a lot happening. Concerning? Yes, because that's a big miss. That's a big foul. That's why we would like to consider putting that for the membership to consider putting that foul category that we can see, putting that (penalty flag) on the field to help. There is a frustration, and we believe that is one category we can potentially get right."

Vikings quarterback Sam Darnold was grabbed by his facemask and brought down in the end zone to end Minnesota's comeback attempt against the Rams on Oct. 24. But there was no call.

On Oct. 3, officials missed a facemask on Buccaneers running back Bucky Irving while he ran for 7 yards late in the fourth quarter. Tampa Bay instead was called for holding on the play, got forced out of field-goal range and Kirk Cousins rallied the Falcons to an overtime victory.

"That is one this year, the facemask seems like it was the obvious one" Vincent said. "That keeps showing up."

Vincent also cited hits on a defenseless player, tripping, the fair catch, an illegal batted ball, an illegal double-team block, illegal formations on kickoffs and taunting as other areas that warrant consideration for replay assist.

Current rules only allow replay assist to help officials pick up a flag incorrectly thrown on the field, or in assisting proper enforcement of a foul called on the field.

The NFL's Competition Committee will review potential recommendations for owners to vote on for expanding replay assist.

Low blocks

Vincent was emphatic about the league's desire to eliminate low blocks that could lead to serious injuries.

"The low block below the knee needs to be removed from the game," Vincent said. "You look at high school, you look at college, too. Every block should be above the knee, but below the neck. All the work that we've done for the head and neck area, all the things that we've taken out of the game, this is the right time for us to remove the low block out of the game. Be consistent with high school. Be consistent with college. Every block should be above the knee and below the neck."

Onside kicks

The league will consider changes to the onside kick after dramatically overhauling the kickoff rule on a one-year basis.

"We need to look at that. That's a dead play," Vincent said of the onside kick's low success rate. "That is a ceremonial play. Very low recovery rate. When we look at the kickoff and maybe where the touchback area should be during the offseason, we need to revisit the onside kick."

Options include giving the team an opportunity to run one play to gain a certain number of yards to keep possession.

Commanders in RFK Stadium

The Washington Commanders' search for a new stadium site includes options in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, and work has escalated on one in particular.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and controlling owner Josh Harris met with lawmakers on Capitol Hill last week about the RFK Stadium site in Washington, which requires a bill getting through Congress to transfer the land to the District government before anything else can happen.

"I think there's a bipartisan support for this," Goodell said, adding he'd like to see it get to a vote soon. "We hope that it will be addressed and approved so that it's at least an alternative for the Commanders if we go forward. I grew up in Washington, and I know would be exciting for a lot of fans."

Expanding schedule

The NFL continues to discuss a potential 18-game season, but would need approval from the players' union.

"We are doing analysis I would say, but we are not finalizing any plans at this point," Goodell said. "They'll share that analysis with the players' union, which would need to agree to any change."

NFL will play its first regular-season game in Berlin in 2025

IRVING, Texas (AP)—The NFL will play its first regular-season game in Berlin in 2025, the league's fifth game ever in Germany.

The game will be played at the Olympic Stadium as part of a multiyear commitment announced Wednesday at the league's winter meetings. The NFL has played regular-season games in Munich and Frankfurt since 2022.

"Germany has a rich tradition of American football, and the NFL has a deep history with the city of Berlin," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "We first held a preseason game at the Olympic Stadium 34 years ago, before it was home to NFL Europe's Berlin Thunder in the early 2000s. Now, with almost 20 million NFL fans in Germany, we'll make a historic return to the city playing a regular-season game for the first time as we open the next chapter in our relationship with Berlin."

The NFL played five American Bowl games at the Olympic Stadium between 1990-1994. League executive Peter O'Reilly said the league's goal is to play eight international regular-season games in 2025 and an annual game in Germany is expected. The NFL already has committed to playing two regular-season games in London at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and one game in Madrid at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium, home to Real Madrid.

"Germany is obviously a major priority market for us," O'Reilly said. "Twenty million fans and growing in Germany. We've seen the passion, you've seen the passion, you've seen the singing. It's an important market. And this partnership with Berlin is not just about the game itself. Like every market we go into, it's about a year-round partnership. It's about working with the city and the community on building flag football into schools and into clubs in that city, and that's important for sure. So we're excited about our plans."

TO LURE JUAN SOTO

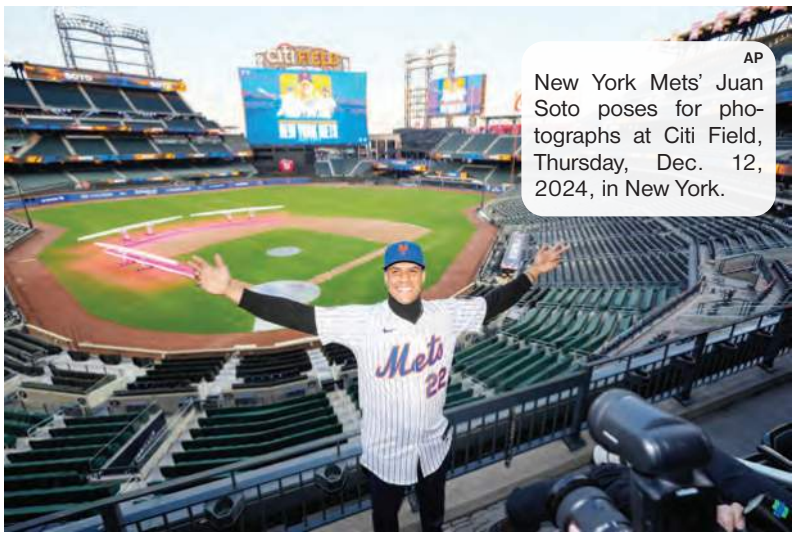
Mets created video of his statue outside Citi Field next to Tom Seaver's

NEW YORK (AP)— The New York Mets wanted Juan Soto to know his future with them could be set in stone.

When the free agent outfielder traveled to owner Steve Cohen's house in Beverly Hills, California, for a presentation last month, the team unveiled a video that included an image of a future Soto statue outside Citi Field, next to the one erected of franchise great Tom Seaver.

"Everything that they showed me, what they have, what they want to do, it was incredible," Soto said. "But my favorite part was the video."

Soto was introduced at Citi Field on Thursday, a day after his record $765 million, 15-year contract was finalized. Speaking in the Piazza 31 Club, he was flanked by Mets owner Steve Cohen, president of baseball operations David Stearns and agent Scott Boras. Security men in gray suits wearing earpieces were off to the side.



AP

New York Mets' Juan Soto poses for photographs at Citi Field, Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, in New York.

The slugger walked in led by Boras, wearing a dark suit, black turtle neck shirt and gold chain with his No. 22. Soto picked the Mets over the New York Yankees, Los Angeles Dodgers, Boston Red Sox and Toronto Blue Jays.

His deal includes a luxury suite and four premium tickets for home games, all for free, and personal team security for the four-time All-Star and his family at the team's expense for all spring training and regular-season home and road games.

"My family is really important for me. Without them, I probably wouldn't have been here," Soto said. "It's one of the biggest things."

Boras had asked for those sweeteners.

"We included it at the beginning," Cohen said. "He made a request and we were happy to provide."

The crosstown Yankees, who reached the World Series for the first time since 2009 in part because of Soto, refused to consider the concept.

"Some high-end players that make a lot of money for us, if they want suites, they buy them," general manager Brian Cashman said.

Cohen purchased the Mets ahead of the 2021 season and has boosted them to baseball's highest payroll in search of the team's first title since 1986—when the World Series MVP, like Soto, wore No. 22 — Ray Knight. The owner thanked his son, Josh, for helping create the video and commended his 93-year-old father-in-law Ralph for attending the first get-together with Soto.

LEOWELL

From page 16

progressively lower totals.

Even with that, the 26-year-old said that his debut is an honor. "It's definitely an honor to represent the NMI in the World Championships and grateful for this opportunity. I definitely learned a lot in the process. And I hope to pay it forward by not only inspiring future weightlifters from the NMI to compete at higher levels, but also do what I can to pave the way in enabling these types of opportunities as well."

He added, "Huge thanks to my family and friends for supporting me. Thanks to Kyle Pierce who helped coach me at Worlds, to Jackie Black for helping me with my training programs, and to CNMI Weightlifting for giving me this opportunity to represent NMI."

He trains four to five times a week, and is studying online for a Masters in kinesiology. He is planning to compete in the 2025 Pacific Mini Games if given the opportunity. He last competed in the 2024 Micronesian Games where he collected two silver medals and one bronze.

Cristobal is now stationed in Japan, serving in a battle management role for the U.S. Air Force.

WAVES

From page 16

Chef Jody O'Sullivan claimed the top spot, while Terra Allen repeated her achievement as the fastest woman.

O'Sullivan dashed through the course that went through the woods that lined Micro Beach and ended in a soak at the beach with a time of 20:08. Second was Jordan Ruiz at 22:14, and right behind for third place was James Munnis at 22:38.

Allen traversed the wet and wild cross-country-like feel of the course with a time of 25:18, while the runner-up was Krista Hawley at 25:56. Third was An Bang who clocked in at 27:24.

In last year's race, Allen was the fastest woman in the old course at East Bay in Kagman with a time of 27:20.

For O'Sullivan, he said the race was great. It was "a completely new course for me. As usual the folks at Run Saipan planned it so well. I absolutely loved the changes in terrain, we went from sand to pavement to grass and back again—it was really nice to have a cross country/trail run feel to it."

His strategy for the race was to first find out where the route was. "The course was really well marked but with trees to obscure the view I wasn't always certain for the first lap where I was supposed to be going next, especially along the beach. Jordan and I kinda shared the wayfinding duties for the first lap or so and then I managed to break away."

The most challenging part of the race for him was the run along the beach. "It wasn't exactly compacted sand so the footing wasn't the best and draining because of it. My legs certainly felt it afterwards! There were a couple of people pushing strollers, that was proper endurance!"

On his first-place win, he said, "I was delighted to win, and very wet! The last part of the run into the sea and back out was a great touch and with the current and the way that Micro Beach kinda falls away it was much deeper and harder than I thought it would be, I definitely had to bust out a front crawl at one point!"

He added, "Again, thanks to all the folks at Run Saipan for such a great event, it was a perfect way to spend a Saturday evening. Already looking forward to the mile race on New Year's Eve!"

REPEAT

From page 16

However, SSHS maintained their dominance in the second half, with Ramon continuing her relentless attack on the basket. Rosie Saralu added to the tally with back-to-back field goals, while the Fatialofa sisters, Azzy and Aiyana, ensured their defense remained impenetrable. In the end, the Lady Rays solidified their place at the top of the food chain with a 32-17 victory.

For SSHS head coach Mike Mercado, he said the season was "definitely an unforgettable season as we worked hard to achieve a perfect one."

With winning back-to-back championships, he said, "For five years we settled for second place. After winning last season we knew we had to make adjustments to our roster to repeat. That's when I heavily recruited the Fatialofa sisters and Shaena Yamada. Aside from that, we started training with our outside team which is known as PRIME. We started training since last June so our chemistry is definitely there."

The difference this year than last, he said, was the added recruits and the experience from the players from last season. It "definitely shows in their play performances. Also, I have my assistant coach who was my star player from last year, Yasmeen Younis. Having her on board definitely made the process easy for our girls."

The competition this year, he said, "is always great. I would like to thank the NMIBF and PSS for giving our female athletes a chance to showcase their basketball talents."

He added, "I would like to thank SSHS for continuing to trust in me although I am no longer an employee of the [Public School System]. Thank you to my players and parents for trusting us through this process. Thank you to my wife and family for understanding the times away from them. Lastly, thank you to all the schools we competed against… "We are not enemies, rather opponents".

With the Fatialofa sisters, Ramon, Yamada and Saralu in the championship team were Angel Calage, Mai Peters, Teneasha Diaz, Kalia Mendiola, Miley Salas, Martha Cabrera, Haani Passi, Phoenix Gross, Megan Elayda, and Mikaenna Nishimura.

Third place went to Mount Carmel School after they bested Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr./Sr. High School, 38-15.

SSHS 32 – Ramon 13, Saralu 12, Fatialofa 4, Fatialofa 3.

MHS 17 – Dela Rosa 9, George 4, Manglona 2, Zandueta 2.

Scoring by halves: 19-11; 32-17.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES
NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	20	5	.800	–
New York	15	10	.600	5
Brooklyn	10	15	.400	10
Philadelphia	7	16	.304	12
Toronto	7	19	.269	13½

Southeast Division

Orlando	17	10	.630	–
Miami	13	10	.565	2
Atlanta	14	13	.519	3
Charlotte	7	18	.280	9
Washington	3	20	.130	12

Central Division

Cleveland	22	4	.846	–
Milwaukee	14	11	.560	7½
Indiana	11	15	.423	11
Chicago	11	15	.423	11
Detroit	10	16	.385	12

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Memphis	18	8	.692	–
Houston	17	9	.654	1
Dallas	16	9	.640	1½
San Antonio	13	12	.520	4½
New Orleans	5	21	.192	13

Northwest Division

Oklahoma City	20	5	.800	–
Denver	13	10	.565	6
Minnesota	13	11	.542	6½
Portland	8	17	.320	12
Utah	5	19	.208	14½

Pacific Division

Golden State	14	10	.583	–
Phoenix	13	11	.542	1
L.A. Clippers	14	12	.538	1
L.A. Lakers	13	12	.520	1½
Sacramento	13	13	.500	2

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CNMI Weightlifting meeting on Dec. 19

CNMI Weightlifting will hold a mandatory meeting for all CNMI weightlifters who are interested in competing on the CNMI Weightlifting Team at the 2025 Pacific Games in Palau from July 1 to 5, 2025.

The meeting will be held this Thursday, Dec. 19, starting at 5:30pm at the weight room of the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium. ***(PR)***

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES
NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Buffalo	10	3	0	.769	397	268
Miami	6	7	0	.462	264	292
e-N.Y. Jets	3	10	0	.231	251	300
e-New England	3	10	0	.231	221	307

South

Houston	8	5	0	.615	308	288
Indianapolis	6	7	0	.462	267	298
e-Jacksonville	3	10	0	.231	238	345
e-Tennessee	3	10	0	.231	227	342

North

Pittsburgh	10	3	0	.769	323	238
Baltimore	8	5	0	.615	383	318
Cincinnati	5	8	0	.385	362	360
e-Cleveland	3	10	0	.231	232	335

West

y-Kansas City	12	1	0	.923	308	252
Denver	8	5	0	.615	305	234
L.A. Chargers	8	5	0	.615	277	207
e-Las Vegas	2	11	0	.154	236	361

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

x-Philadelphia	11	2	0	.846	342	234
Washington	8	5	0	.615	376	296
Dallas	5	8	0	.385	268	366
e-N.Y. Giants	2	11	0	.154	194	293

South

Tampa Bay	7	6	0	.538	363	309
Atlanta	6	7	0	.462	278	333
New Orleans	5	8	0	.385	290	292
Carolina	3	10	0	.231	233	388

North

x-Detroit	12	1	0	.923	417	234
Minnesota	11	2	0	.846	339	240
Green Bay	9	4	0	.692	349	274
Chicago	4	9	0	.308	254	278

West

Seattle	8	5	0	.615	302	283
L.A. Rams	8	6	0	.571	310	338
Arizona	6	7	0	.462	284	289
San Francisco	6	8	0	.429	314	320

e-eliminated from playoffs | x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

Giannis, Bucks top Hawks, earn spot in NBA Cup finals

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Mets created video of his statue outside Citi Field next to Tom Seaver's

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NMIBF

Back-to-back champions Saipan Southern High School Lady Manta Rays pose for a group photo during the awards ceremony of the 2024-2025 IT&E Interscholastic Girls High School Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last Friday.

Repeat for undefeated Lady Rays hoops team

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The undefeated Saipan Southern High School Lady Manta Rays capped their 2024-2025 season with a championship for back-to-back titles in the IT&E Interscholastic Girls High School Basketball League.

In a jam-packed and rowdy Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last Friday night, it was a sink-or-swim finals against the Lady Rays and the Marianas High School Lady Dolphins.

The Lady Rays came out on top with a 32-17 final after blanking the Lady Dolphins for the better part of the first half.

SSHS got the ball rolling early on and with 14 minutes left on the clock, held an 8-0 advantage. Jahsmine Ramon was a ball magnet and converted 8 points in the first half as MHS struggled for possession.

With 10 minutes remaining, the Lady Rays held a commanding 19-0 lead, prompting a substitution of the starters for the bench players. From there, MHS finally got on board and managed to score 11 points for an 11-19 game.

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LEIGH GASES

Saipan Southern High School's Jahsmin Ramon goes for an uncontested layup during their finals against Marianas High School in the 2024-2025 IT&E Interscholastic Girls High School Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last Friday.

LEIGH GASES

Saipan Southern High School's Azzy Fatialofa attempts a jumper against Marianas High School defenders during the finals of the 2024-2025 IT&E Interscholastic Girls High School Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last Friday.

Leowell makes historic NMI debut in IWF World Champs

IWF

Leowell Cristobal completes a lift during NMI's historic debut in the International Weightlifting Federation World Championships 2024 in Manama, Bahrain last Dec. 7.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gravity-defier Leowell Cristobal made a historic debut for the NMI and reset personal best lifts in the International Weightlifting Federation World Championships 2024 in Manama, Bahrain last Dec. 7.

The U.S. Air Force airman competed in Group C's 67-kg weight class and pulled an overall personal best of 105 kg snatch and a 143 kg clean & jerk, for a 248-kg total weight lifted for sixth place.

There were three groups in the competition based on lifters' declared entry totals which are the combined weight they expect to lift in the snatch and clean & jerk.

Group A typically consists of the strongest athletes with the highest entry totals, while Group B and Group C include those with

See LEOWELL on Page 15

O'Sullivan, Allen make waves in Dash & Splash 5K

ED DELA CRUZ

First place overall Jody O'Sullivan runs out of the water during the 2024 Run Saipan Dash & Splash at Micro Beach last Saturday.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The "golden hour" isn't just perfect for selfies—it's also the ideal time for runners and sunset lovers to race. This was evident last Saturday as Run Saipan hosted its unconventional 2024 Dash & Splash 5K at Micro Beach.

With the stunning backdrop of Mañagaha overlooking the coastline, more than 30 runners took part, washing away the sweat of racing and the day's busy-ness.

See WAVES on Page 15

ED DELA CRUZ

First place in the women's division Terra Allen runs against the current in the 2024 Run Saipan Dash & Splash runs out of the water during the race at Micro Beach last Saturday.

ED DELA CRUZ

Participants of the 2024 Run Saipan Dash & Splash pose for a group photo on the shores of Micro Beach during the 2024 Run Saipan Dash & Splash last Saturday.